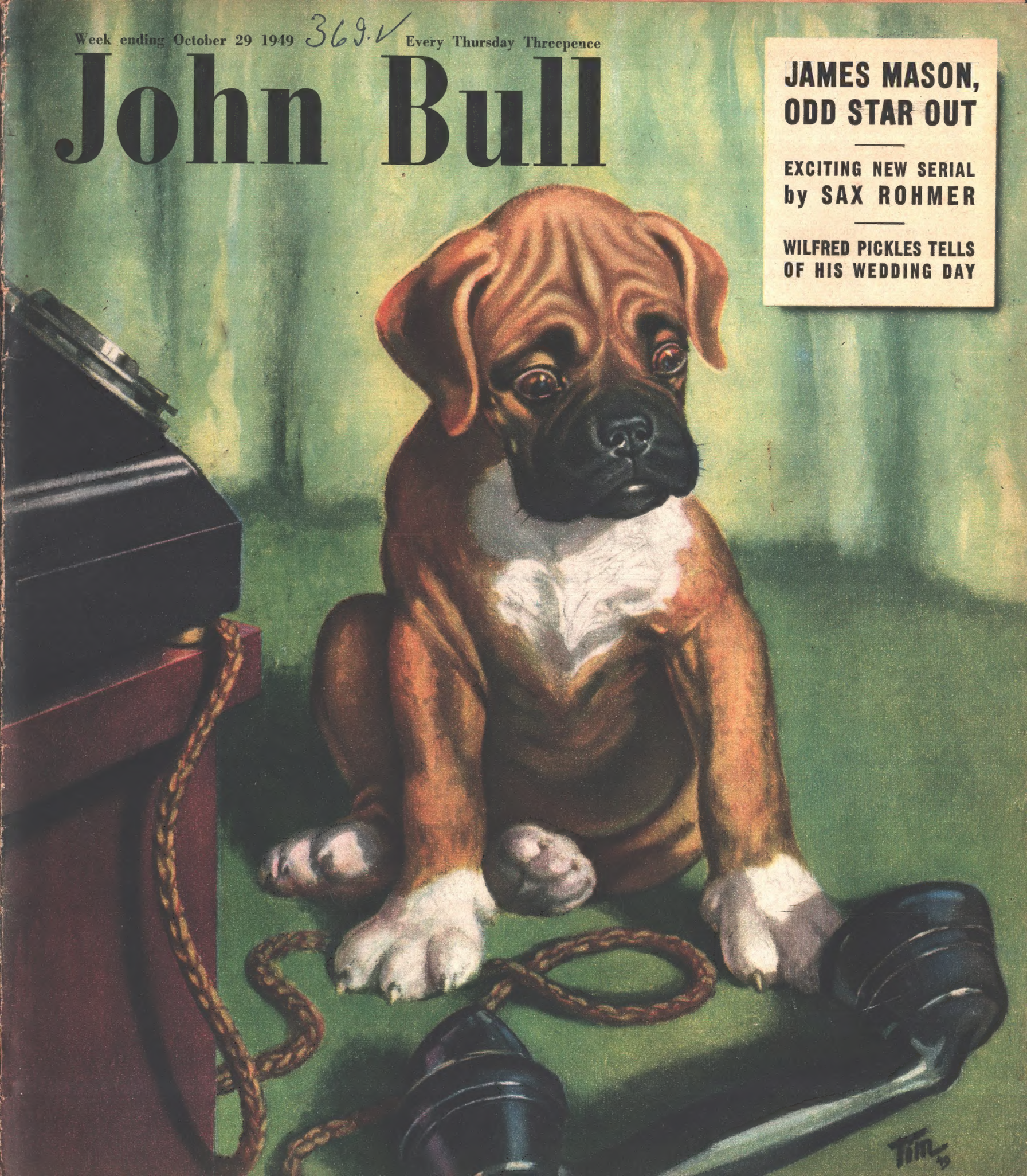
Week ending October 29 1949 369.V Every Thursday Threepence

John Bull

JAMES MASON, ODD STAR OUT

EXCITING NEW SERIAL by SAX ROHMER

WILFRED PICKLES TELLS OF HIS WEDDING DAY



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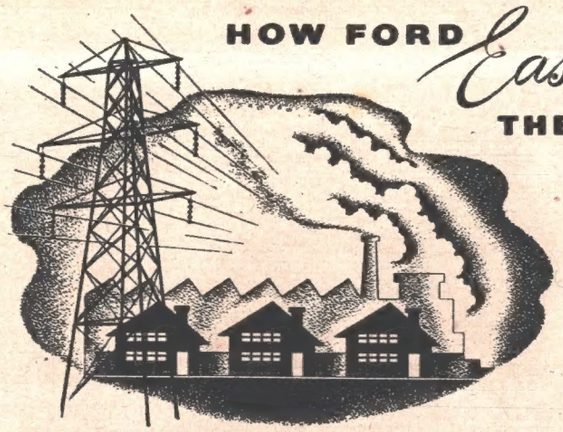

We have all heard about the "load" — "shedding the load" — and the strain which the industrial and domestic requirements place on the nation's supply of gas and electricity. The Ford organisation at Dagenham does not draw on that supply but *contributes* to it. The great works at Dagenham makes its own gas and electricity — and in such quantity that a considerable surplus is made available to the public. Thousands of kitchen stoves are kept happily cooking by the Dagenham surplus, and this without in any way interfering with the steady and increasing flow of traffic along the factory production lines and on the export jetty. So Ford of Dagenham eases Britain's load — serves Britain's recovery from the kitchen to the ends of the earth.

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(205D)

Portrait of a wicked man . . .

He's a family man. Lives in a nice house. Children go to a good school. His wife adores him. Holidays every year—birthdays never forgotten. But—he *has* forgotten to make certain his family would be all right if something happened to him. Yes, he has a policy—but so small! He couldn't be bothered to listen to the Refuge representative. Pity. The certain thing in life is uncertainty . . .

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E D I T O R I A L

A reply to the man who wants more money

EVERY TIME A WAGE goes up a price goes up—and every time a price goes up somebody thinks about demanding another rise in wages.

That is the simplest possible way of expressing what economists call "the inflationary spiral." And whatever name you apply to this economists' bogey, one thing is certain — it is potentially very dangerous. Devaluation of the pound may cause it to climb faster, if rising prices make all grades of workers press their own claims for higher pay.

Sir Stafford Cripps obviously knew that this might happen: and that was why, when he explained the effects of devaluation to Parliament, he said that people below a "reasonable minimum" standard of living would still be entitled to put forward wage claims.

But he did not explain exactly what he meant by a reasonable minimum, and it is this doubt, this lack of any defined and generally accepted bottom level of comfort, which is causing most of the trouble in our industries today.

Too many feel that their own standard of living is below the reasonable minimum. Too many more are frankly jealous of others better off than themselves.

This accumulated discontent saps the energy and enthusiasm we must have for the work we have all got to do if Great Britain is to recover independence and prosperity. It ought to be ended. Can it be?

THE simplest looking remedy proposed is to pass a law saying that there shall be a national minimum wage, for all adult workers, of, say, five pounds a week. This sounds reasonable. But when you look into the proposition you find that it would cause almost as many injustices as it would cure. A bachelor can live much more comfortably on five pounds than a husband can—let alone a husband with several children. The higher income tax paid by a bachelor, because he gets no allowances for wife and children, does not nearly wipe out the difference.

Then, it costs more to live in London and some other big cities than in small towns or in the country because rents and rates are higher and workers usually have to pay more for travelling to and from their jobs.

Another trouble is that a minimum wage would increase the reward of unskilled labour in the same proportion as that of skilled labour. The unskilled might then think: Why bother to learn a difficult trade when we can earn just as much, or nearly as much, without taking any extra trouble at all? And if only unskilled workers really benefited by a minimum wage, the others would either become disgruntled or would themselves begin to demand proportionate increases.

Indeed, under what is called the wage structure of some industries, such demands would take place automatically unless ruled out by law. But if they were so ruled out, they could not be prevented. You can never create content by legislation.

No—this problem cannot properly be solved by a stroke of the Government's pen creating a national minimum wage.

PERHAPS there is some other way to bring the smallest incomes up to the lowest reasonable level. Special cost-of-living allowances, based on an official "index," are granted in some countries. These are paid for by the State out of taxes. But nobody wants to see our already heavy taxes raised for this or any other purpose. Nor does anybody want to undergo the sort of means test which would be necessary if such allowances were to be fairly distributed.

Another suggestion is to raise the food subsidies or family allowances, or both. One objection to this proposal is that it would benefit people who are well off just as much as the poorest.

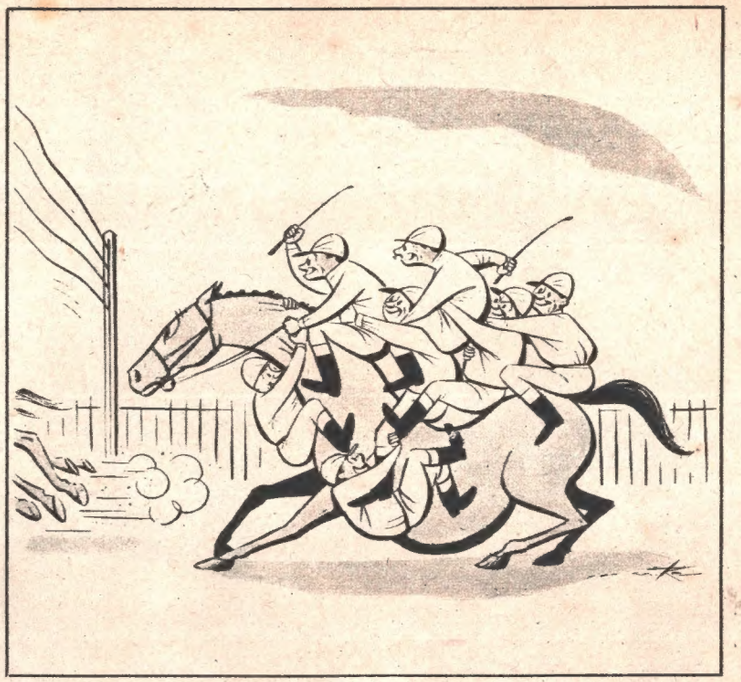
The other objection is, of course, that the State—that is, we taxpayers —would once more have to find more money.

So none of these ideas really stands up to examination. Yet we cannot afford to drift back into a chronic state of industrial warfare over wages.

First, then, we must meet the special claims of workers whose wage rate is so low that they are believed to be beneath a reasonable minimum standard of living. But if, for example, such increases as those demanded for the lower-paid railwaymen are granted—in whole or in part —that will be the time for the better paid not to weigh in with further claims on their own behalf, but to play their part loyally in the country's struggle.

To them the Government has already said: "You can have more money if production goes up—and only if production goes up!" In other words, nobody wants to prevent higher earnings so long as they are justified by results. It may mean more overtime, or some Saturday morning work, but the answer to the worker who simply must have more money is surely: "Go to it—and give us some more output in return."

JOHN BULL 189 HIGH HOLBORN LONDON W.C.1
OCTOBER 29, 1949 VOLUME 86 NUMBER 2261 PHONE: TEMPLE BAR 2468 GRAMS: HEROICALLY, WESTCENT, LONDON



What to do to reach the winning post

GET HOLD of a really good horse. Then crowd as many riders on as possible. If it's overloaded—don't worry — squeeze them up and jump on. Now set off for the winning post. The horse will falter — may even stop now and then — keep going . . . you'll reach the post. But you won't win the race.

Crazy, isn't it? And yet that is exactly what happens when too many people try to use too much electricity at the same time. The load is too much for the existing Power Stations to carry and power cuts become inevitable. They *can* be avoided if we use *less* electricity in homes, offices and shops during the Peak Hours. We can use the electricity we need — *off* Peak!

THE PEAK—
What it means

Power Stations have 'Peak' hours — just as buses and trains have 'rush' hours. They occur when, in addition to the essential needs of industry, the demand for electricity from homes, offices and shops becomes too heavy.

From Monday to Friday the usual Peak Hours are:

8 to 9.30 a.m.
from October 1st to March 31st
and in addition:
4.0 to 5.30 p.m.
from November 1st to January 15th.

During these times *the factories must come first.*

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SUNLIGHT
really does the work—
because it's **REAL SOAP**

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Free Speech

DAUGHTER'S LIFE IN POLAND

NORMAN PHILLIPS'S ARTICLE on Poland (JOHN BULL, October 8) interested me very much because my youngest daughter married a Polish Air Force officer and went back to Poland with him when the Government declared an amnesty.

They had free passages and my son-in-law got work at once in an office, working from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. At first they lived with his parents. Now they have their own house and garden and a little son, and my daughter is teaching English at college and privately. The Poles are now learning English instead of German.

My daughter has just had a fortnight's holiday in the mountains, with free travel and full board for about 2s. 6d. a day. She says the people are kind and food is cheap and plentiful. But clothing is dear and rather scarce.

The churches are full to overflowing and people walk miles to attend. In the towns most people wear the same sort of clothes as here and the dressmaker always has English fashion magazines.—MRS. M. MACDERMOTT, 95 Kirkbank Street, Oldham, Lancs.

"Bijoux" Fixed

K. J. PETTS'S lovely painting of a French street (JOHN BULL, September 10) showed a shop sign with the inscription "*Bijoux Fix.*" I have just returned from France and noticed many of these signs. Are they merely signs on jewellers' shops or do they denote some kind of chain store?—MISS I. MCKENNA, Irwinestown, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland.

*** The sign means that the jeweller deals in inexpensive jewellery. "Bijoux" is the French word for jewellery. "Fix" is the trade mark of a big firm which supplies inexpensive jewellery to the shops.*—EDITOR.

The Cost Of Living

ONE OF MY CUSTOMERS came in the other day and began to tell me his troubles.

"What's the good of six pounds ten nowadays?" he began. "Twelve and six on the pools, five shillings on the geegees and three and six to see a football match, not to mention fags. How much is that toy train," he concluded. "It's our youngster's birthday tomorrow."

"Nine and sixpence," I said.

"The kid's unlucky," he replied, pulling a wry face. "He'll have to wait for it."—MRS. EDITH WALKER, 19 Romsey Road, Southampton.

Husbands Behind Bars

CAN NOTHING BE DONE for wives whose husbands are continually in jail. My husband was arrested for theft soon after we were married in 1940. Because I was having a baby, I stuck to him hoping he would go straight. But when he was freed he took to stealing again.

For a long time I didn't know where he was. Then he wrote, from prison. This time it was four years.

When he came out I gave him another chance and for eight months we were happy. Then he was arrested again and got another four years. It's five years since I set eyes on him, and out of the nine and a half years of our marriage, I've lived with him for only about a year.

I live in hopes of getting a Poor Law divorce but how much longer will I have to wait for it? I'll likely get it when I'm too old to enjoy married life.—MRS. D. L., Scotland.

The Silent English

G. T. Bandukwala

WHEREVER I GO in England I am attracted by the quiet and peaceful nature of the people. Men and women do their work happily and silently. Even motor cars are noiseless. In two months, not once have I heard a horn.

I have never come across a person shouting or whistling in a public thoroughfare. And once I had the experience of sitting by the side of an Englishman for three hours, and in the end he remained a stranger to me. All this is really amazing.—G. T. BANDUKWALA, 25 Demesne Road, Manchester.

What's In A Name?

MY SON, AGED SIXTEEN, fancied going to work in the pits. He had to undergo a fitness test and was asked to write down his father's, mother's, brothers' and sisters' names. I have been a miner for over thirty years, but I cannot see what this has to do with pit work.—T. H., Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Give Him The Money, Barney!

THANK YOU FOR GIVING us the life story of Wilfred Pickles. It is so true to life. Reading the first instalment, I both laughed and cried. I went through the same things, the going away, going to Sunday school three times on Sunday, not making a noise on Sunday. I used to dread it.—MRS. T. ROWBOTTOM, 17 Pickford Lane, Dukinfield, Cheshire.

. . . It is the most human autobiography I have ever read. If we could each and every one of us be just as human what a difference it would make.—J. E. GRIBBIN, 46 Panton Road, Liverpool.

. . . Congratulations on bringing to the public the story of this great personality. Somehow, I always get a pleasurable feeling of excitement from reading the text of a book not yet published. It's rather like a film preview.—J. T. S., Leeds.

Football A "Crime"

FOR PLAYING FOOTBALL in a public park I have just been ordered to pay a fine of ten shillings or go to a reform school for five days. I think this is a bit stiff, as this was my first offence. At the same court, a boy of twelve was charged with stabbing another with a bread knife. He was put on probation. And a boy who had hit another with a broken bottle was fined ten shillings. Why should I be charged with such people, just for playing football?—SCHOOLBOY, Glasgow.

John Bull welcomes readers' views, experiences and ideas for publication. A guinea is paid for every letter used. Mark the envelope "Free Speech" and make sure your full name and address is in the letter.

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Ask Mummy, who enjoys it at Eleven.

Ask Daddy, who likes it 'last thing'.

Ask the children, who love it anytime!

real Chocolate flavour!

Master OXO

adds the master flavour

You will see more of Master OXO with his helpful suggestions for enriching your meals.

STAR OVERNIGHT!

AND THEN FAILURE...

FIRST NIGHT OF NEW BALLET
CONGRATULATIONS, SIR IAN, ON YOUR NEW STAR, SHEILA HOLDEN, SUPERB!
A MONTH LATER
IT'S NO USE I-I'M TOO TIRED...
THAT EVENING
WHAT ON EARTH'S HAPPENED TO YOUR LITTLE SHEILA, SIR IAN?
I DON'T KNOW. SHE SEEMS ABSOLUTELY LIFELESS!
I'M SORRY MISS HOLDEN, BUT I'M AFRAID WE'LL HAVE TO DROP YOU OUT OF THE LEAD
I'VE GOT NO ENERGY AT ALL. I EVEN WAKE UP TIRED! I WONDER IF IT'S THE DULL FOOD WE GET THESE DAYS?
WE'LL ASK THE DOCTOR, DEAR. NOW PLEASE DRY YOUR EYES AND COME ALONG
AT THE DOCTOR'S
NO, NO! YOUR FOOD IS NOT TO BLAME. YOUR ENERGY IS CONTROLLED BY SOMETHING ELSE AS WELL AS FOOD. SOMETHING JUST AS IMPORTANT, AND OFF THE RATION – SLEEP! IF YOU WAKE UP TIRED, IT SHOWS YOU AREN'T GETTING THE RIGHT KIND OF SLEEP. ONLY DEEP SLEEP RESTORES ENERGY. I ADVISE HORLICKS
AND SO HORLICKS EVERY NIGHT
SOME MONTHS LATER
(THINKS) I BACKED A WINNER AFTER ALL!
BRAVO!
BRAVO!

Why do people wake up tired?

IT'S NOT ONLY BALLERINAS who get overtired these days! Thousands of people complain of waking up tired, even after 7 or 8 hours' sleep. No wonder they find things too much for them.

Some blame the food and the dullness of our meals, but food isn't the only answer. Our energy is controlled by sleep, as well as by food. If you wake up tired, it proves you are not getting the right kind of sleep. Only deep sleep has the power to restore lost energy.

The way to get this *deep* sleep is to treat yourself to a hot cup of Horlicks every night. Horlicks soothes strained nerves, helps the weary body to relax in *deep* sleep. In the morning you wake gloriously refreshed.

Start taking Horlicks regularly at bedtime!

HORLICKS

"And don't forget the YESTAMIN!"

Help yourself to *positive* health at every meal with Yestamin Daily Yeast. Rich in proteins and the B group vitamins, whose lack is often cause of many minor ailments. Yestamin is *only* yeast—contains no drugs whatsoever. Three tablets with each meal release *extra* energy from all your food.

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It's only natural...

.... for her to include the Pup in 'washing-day', although he may not see eye to eye with her. Happily occupied, she's seldom bored or fretful. But should some minor upset put her out of sorts, then Mother naturally turns to 'California Syrup of Figs' to restore regularity, bright eyes and sunny nature. This kindly, pleasant laxative contains extracts of senna and ripe figs. Purely vegetable and naturally nice.

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JAMES MASON – ODD STAR OUT

by JANE COURTLEY

He's forty now, and permanently out of step. He shuns publicity, discourages fans, treads on everyone's toes—and still manages to be a phenomenal success

NOT LONG AGO James Mason, who has lived in America these past three years, made arrangements to sail back across the Atlantic to co-star with Greta Garbo in an Italian-made motion picture. For reasons which have not been made clear to the public this production, which was to have been based on Balzac's *Duchess of Langeais*, has been put off, then on, then off again until in final desperation Mason cancelled his passage on the eve of his scheduled departure.

Thus he finds himself in the middle of a muddle and on the teetering edge of controversy. This is nothing new for the forty-year-old British actor.

With the possible exceptions of Garbo herself and a Hollywood dog called Lassie, nobody in films could differ more from the conventional idea of what a star should be and do than cat-loving, Pressman-hating, controversial Mason. Yet he stays on top.

Four Years On Top

Although until this month no new film of his had been shown in Britain for some years, the last exhibitor's poll in the *Motion Picture Herald* rated him tenth on the box office list, while for the previous four consecutive years he was number one.

Proverbially difficult, he seems to possess the knack of making and breaking friendships and conventions with equal rapidity and sincerity. How much of this is real? How much is due to publicity ballyhoo?

There is certainly nothing assumed in his dislike of large sections of the Press. It was typically Mason that, instead of arriving in New York, three years ago, in a wave of publicity designed to endear him to the American public, he became embroiled in a £625,000 law suit with David Rose, then American chief of Paramount Pictures in Britain.

Mason eventually won his case. All the same, he did little to make himself liked by the powerful U.S. Press. Instead, he chose to hit out at the columnists who have the reputation of being able to knock a star down to the rank of has-been with a single word.

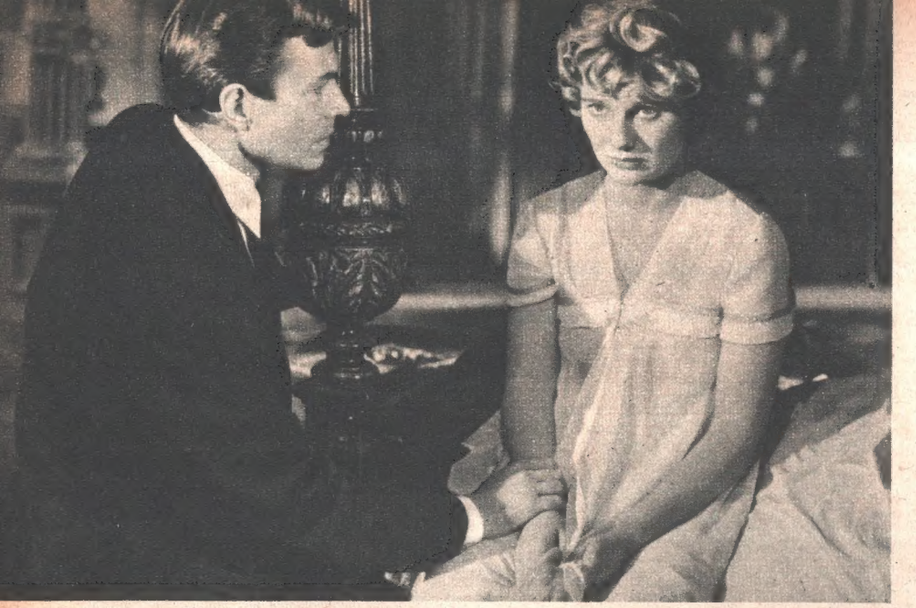
Imaginary Monocle

"When I read that 'James Mason was seen dining last night at the Cockadoodledoo,'" he wrote, "'and laughed so much at the floor show that his monocle fell out,' I attribute it to the inventive mind of the Cockadoodledoo's Press agent. I can neither remember the Cockadoodledoo nor the incident with the imaginary monocle.

"When the columnists state categorically that I have been signed in *Robinson Crusoe* for M-G-M or *The Saxon Charm* for Universal, it generally means representatives of the studios concerned have toyed with the idea of sending me the script to read. . . ."

This ribbing of the Press might have caused another star to have been boycotted on Broadway. Not Mason. His popularity was such that by summer, 1947, less than a year after his arrival, his fan clubs in the

Mason, wife Pamela Kellino, Siamese cat Heathcliffe, and daughter Portland. Joan Bennett gave gold pins to keep nappies up



James Mason in his first Hollywood film, *Caught*, with Barbara Bel Geddes. Hollywood hasn't fulfilled his hopes: he wants more freedom

States had grown to an enormous total.

It was necessary to form a Federation of James Mason Fan Clubs to co-ordinate the network of enthusiasts and supporters across the United States. Some of the overnight clubs, cashing in on the popularity of the Englishman who might not bother to cross-check their activities, were even taking entrance fees and then skipping out with the cash.

Passion For Cats

The passion of Mason and his wife, Pamela, for their cats is also a cause of contention. It is no mere publicity craze.

Soon after the two met, while Pamela was still married to Roy Kellino, they found a stray cat in Leeds railway station, named it Lady Leeds, and took it to join Top Boy, already installed in Mason's London flat.

Three years later, after the Kellino marriage had been dissolved, James and Pamela set up their own home, a bungalow on an estate at Taplow, near Maidenhead. Lady Leeds, Top Boy and a host of distant relatives shared the bungalow.

One of the cats escaped at night and managed to frighten the woman owner of the estate to near-hysterics. Fearing an embargo on the cats, the Masons at once offered to move.

More recently, after Mason had appeared in New York in *Bathsheba*, during which an organized gang threw rotten fruit on the stage, he wrote home in a vein which indicated that his devotion to his cats was stronger than his desire to enhance his career.

"In the closing days of *Bathsheba*," he wrote, "I returned home one night to find that Tree was missing. . . . We did not locate him until two weeks later, when workmen along the Merritt Parkway about four miles from my home found his body. He had been hit by a car. . . .

"As a result of this misfortune we moved away from Greenwich and took up residence nearer New York. We were only there a few weeks when Top Boy disappeared.

"We feel certain he has met the same fate as Tree. For that reason I am abandoning all plans for a New York production and thinking seriously of going to Hollywood at once. . . ."

Another stimulus to public curiosity about the Masons is the naming of their first baby "Portland."

Mason explains: "While we were in New York we became very friendly with the Fred Allens." (Mason gave a number of performances with the Fred Allen, and other, broadcasts.) "His wife's name is Portland Hoffa. . . .

"Mrs. Allen was so charming that we both wanted to name our daughter after her, in the hope that Portland would grow up something like her prototype." More recently, the baby has been called "Goldenpins" because film star Joan Bennett gave her a pair of golden safety pins to keep her nappies up.

How He Started

Although Mason did make a string of films in Hollywood — *Caught*, *Madame Bovary*, *East Side, West Side* and *The Blank Wall*—he did not find the opportunities he expected there. He hopes that in artistically independent studios, such as Italy's Cinecita, he might have more freedom.

A search for the cause of Mason's rule-defying, convention-breaking ways takes you back to the days when he acted with a small-time repertory company for £2 10s. a week. Since a wealthy family backing made it unnecessary for him to work, he took on a film or theatre task only if he felt he could do it better than anybody else.

Mason's stubborn, suppressed, Huddersfield nature does not easily forgive a hurt. Early in his film career Mason was unwittingly hurt by Korda. It probably accounts for much of Mason's subsequent desire to be independent.

It happened when Korda offered him a part in *The Return of Don Juan*, starring the late Douglas Fairbanks.

For six days Mason worked in front of the cameras. Then, just after the lunch break, one of the studio executives—unknown to Korda—saw rushes of the early takes and decided they wanted a different type for the part. Mason was told as nicely as possible that it wasn't quite his cup of tea.

This seemed wasteful to Mason. In a letter to a film paper only two years after his first film he was stating: "If we are to compete seriously with Hollywood we shall do so only by improving the standard of our cheap, unpretentious films and by forgetting our extravagant endeavours to capture the world market with super production."

His Only Long Contract

At about this time, Mason worked for nearly three years without averaging more than £20 a week. He was then working under the only long-term contract he has ever had.

The contract was for £40 a week when working. The snag was in the operative words "when working."

In those days of quota quickies, many films were made in less than ten days, and then the players concerned had a few weeks "resting" while capital was raised, or the script written, for the next masterpiece. Much of Mason's testy attitude to film contract legalities may be due to this period.

During the slump in 1937, Mason was signed for only one film, *Catch as Catch Can*. It was directed by Roy Kellino. James and Pam had already begun to team up as an artistically sympathetic pair. And as the three of them had so little to do otherwise, they sat down and planned an attack on the West End stage.

James, perverse as ever, devised a theme which the others assured him might evoke censorship trouble, especially if the stage lighting were not precisely cued. They ironed out the dangers, they thought, and completed the script in a fortnight.

The provisional title was *Flying Blind*. The play was tried out at the Arts Theatre. "I warned Mason that it was going to be very difficult for the electricians to follow some of the cues," says the Arts' Harry Mossman.

"He just smiled in the friendliest possible way, indicating without words that he thought me a pin-headed fool. The play went on as planned.

"The light cues did go wrong. There were one or two scenes supposed to show adjacent bedrooms. The wrong room was illuminated and then there were embarrassing seconds, seeming like hours, when all house and stage lights were out.

"The audience began to titter, reading into the play things which weren't intended. They loved it." The censor didn't. *Flying Blind* came off after the second night.

Shoe-string Budget

The next year James, Roy and Pamela were among the jobless thousands of the film industry. Mason decided a film could be made on a shoe-string budget of much under the £250,000 which even a modest British picture costs today. The three partners pooled their resources and came up with £4,000. They bought a camera, hired sound-recording and film-processing facilities. Since they could not afford a studio, most of the film was shot outdoors. They hired a caravan and piled their kit into an old car they bought for £15 10s.

They hitch-hiked and drove their ramshackle car round Britain, shooting scenes as they went. When the sound was recorded on the strip, it was found to be too loud in parts. They couldn't afford any more film. The sound was left as it was.

But Mason had defied Wardour Street. When the film was ready the trade turned it down. Not until eight months later did they find a distributor to handle *I Met a Murderer*.

Fans Like Him Cruel

Mason is typed by the fact that millions of women swept him to popularity as the screen's Number One sadist, villain and sufferer. When he is beating Margaret Lockwood in *Wicked Lady* or is dead on his feet, as in *Odd Man Out*, he is box office. When he wanders into other aspects of acting, many of his fans fail to follow.

"He stimulates me," writes Moira Sinfield in *The Mason Manuscript*, one of the many Mason fan magazines produced in America. "In *Fanny by Gaslight* he is sitting dining with his current lady-love, and she is pleading for reassurance of his undying love. She whines softly: 'Don't you love me?'

"He lifts her hand to his lips, places a tender kiss upon it and answers with a very bored 'no!' *I could cheerfully have killed him*. But I'll never forget that scene."

Mason does not like it, but that is his real impact on the public. And because of it he is a gold mine.

THE TWO WINSTON CHURCHILLS

WINSTON CHURCHILL'S dual personality—which puzzles his supporters and opponents alike—is brilliantly analysed in next week's issue of JOHN BULL. The distinguished American-born writer, Virginia Cowles, gives a revealing close-up of Churchill from personal acquaintance. Look out for this in . . .

John Bull Next Week

The murdered man was a stranger. But was he, Kennedy wondered, a stranger to Lady Hilary?

And whose were the footprints in the blood? Continuing John Bull's gripping new mystery serial

HANGOVER HOUSE

by SAX ROHMER

ILLUSTRATED BY SEABRIGHT

STORM KENNEDY, private detective, had finished work for the day, and was settled comfortably in dressing-gown and slippers, when General Lord Glengale was announced.

It was no social call. The general was worried. His daughter, the beautiful Lady Hilary Bruton, was in trouble. Just what the trouble was he didn't know; but he suspected blackmail, and Hilary, "mettlesome stuff," as he described her, wasn't the sort of girl to receive blackmail threats without retaliating.

Kennedy accepted the assignment and got to work. Discovering that Lady Hilary and her aunt Elfie were attending a party at Hangover House, a country mansion—to which he himself had been invited—he lost no time in driving there.

Hangover House was swathed in fog. Picking his way through the gates with difficulty, Kennedy was greeted by Peter Faraway, young, scatterbrained husband of his hostess. A few minutes later, Faraway was greeting a grimmer visitor—his shouts brought Kennedy running to the terrace.

By the light of a torch Kennedy saw the body of a man in a pool of blood. At his side was a curious Oriental dagger.

PART II

Mohammed Looks In

"DON'T touch him!" said Storm Kennedy sharply. "Touch nothing." He stood up and met Peter Faraway's stare.

"The poor chap *is* dead, isn't he?" Kennedy nodded.

"Very dead—within the last few minutes."

"But——"

"My God! That explains it!"

The frightened, intruding voice made them both turn round. The fair-haired young man who wore spectacles stood there staring down.

"Explains *what*?" Kennedy demanded.

"The row I heard. Sort of gabbling, and—er—loud breathing. It was just after you came in and asked me if I'd—er—seen somebody or other. Then I heard a kind of choking cough. But I thought it was some chap being sick."

He sounded as though he might be sick himself, at any moment.

Kennedy flicked his flashlamp alight and looked at his wrist watch.

"That would make the time of the attack approximately one thirty." He glanced down again at the contorted figure on the ground. "One of your guests, Peter?"

"Good Lord, no! Never saw him before in my life. But, wait a minute. He might be. Joan got this party up, and she knows all sorts of queer birds I don't know."

They fell into silence; one of those strange silences which come at the most unlikely moments. Three pairs of eyes stared downwards.

Kennedy found himself listening—he could not have said for what. There was a sustained whispering, like a sigh, and a drip-drip as of tears. He knew it to be caused by mist condensing on the leaves, but it depressed his spirit. Almost overhanging the steps, some kind of willow drooped spectral arms, a ghost tree. Beyond, in hidden acres, fog-sheeted, the assassin might be stealing away.

"Stay here and keep the women clear, Peter. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Kennedy ran up the steps and along a few paces to the window of the room harbouring many relics. He had seen a telephone on a table there. He found the window wide open, now, but the room in darkness. He pulled up for a moment, assailed by a sudden thought.

When, a few minutes earlier, he had looked into this odd sanctum from the terrace, a floor lamp had been burning. When Hilary ran out into the corridor the room had been in darkness.

Who had switched the light off? When—and why?

He snapped his flashlamp on, and stepped inside.

Sixty wasted seconds satisfied him. The line was dead.

He was about to run back along the terrace when a faint sound checked him. He switched his light off.

Someone very quietly opened a door on the other side of the room. Kennedy knew it was that from which Hilary had come out. A slender figure whose head seemed to be of a curious shape was silhouetted against faint light from the corridor.

"Is anyone there?" said a soft voice.

KENNEDY shot a ray on to the man's face. He saw an Egyptian who wore a fez. The man's large, deer-like eyes never blinked; he merely stared, inquiringly.

"Were you expecting someone?" Kennedy asked.

"The wise man expects nothing, sir."

"Is this your house?"

"I have no house, other than the house of clay which the All-knowing, the Omnipotent fashioned to imprison my spirit."

"H'm. Have you been in here before?"

"Twice, sir. Once, to converse with a student and philosopher, and a second time in search of the Honourable Peter."

"When was the second time?"

"Perhaps some ten minutes ago."

"What lights were on?"

"This light, only."

Mohammed indicated the lamp by the open window.

"Anybody in here?"

"No one, Effendi."

"Did you switch the lamp off?"

"Why should I disturb the arrangements of others?"

"You mean you didn't?"

"Such is my meaning."

Storm Kennedy challenged the gentle eyes, but they met his regard unflinchingly. He went out and back to where two shadowy figures loomed through the fog.

"Phone's out of order, Peter," said Kennedy rapidly. "But there's a call-box at the end of the lane leading to this place. I know, because I ran into it when I came. There are one or two things I must check immediately. So it will have to be you. Feel up to it?"

"Positively. Never soberer in my life, dear soul. Astonishing. What do I say?"

"Police. Surgeon. Murder. Hangover House. Hurry."

Peter Faraway considered this, then: "Got it," he replied, and turned, stood still, combed his fingers through disordered hair. "But wait a minute. Let me think. Joan has pinched the car."

Kennedy, impatiently, spun around on the fair and now pale young man.

"Got a car?"

"Yes—yes, I have."

"You drive him, then. Come on, Peter."

He was feverishly anxious to get these witnesses away from the scene of the crime—to conduct a private examination before the police arrived. Grasping Peter Faraway's arm, he hurried him along past the open windows of the big hall, around the angle of the house and into the weedy courtyard where cars were parked.

"It's not going to be easy, you know," said the fair young man as he switched on the headlights of his car.

"You'll manage. It's no distance. Push off."

He waited until the car crawled past the open gates; then he turned back.

Who else was in the house, apart from those he knew? Who was the softly-spoken Egyptian, and where had he been at the time of the crime? Who was the "student and philosopher" to whom he referred?

And why had Hilary Bruton come running out of the darkened room? How long had she been in there? For, during the short interval which had elapsed between the time when he first spoke to the fair youth and the time when he met Miss Elphinstowe in the lobby, a man had been stabbed to death on the terrace outside!

Storm quickly checked over the cars. There were four, including his own and the car in which Peter had gone, and which could still be heard stuttering through the darkness on its way down the serpentine elm tunnel leading to the main road and the call-box. No other car had left Hangover House since he had arrived. Of this he was sure.

Apparently there were no servants in this singular establishment. Not a living creature appeared in the weedy courtyard. Kennedy wondered to whom the place belonged and how it had come to be selected by Joan Faraway for her party. He went inside again, and found no one in the gloomy lobby. The panelled hall was also deserted. Fear of being fog-bound accounted for the break-up of the party, the disappearance of the caterers; but what of the people who lived there?

IT was more than peculiar. It was uncanny. *Somebody* must live in the place, as evidenced by the furnishing of the room marked "Private."

Storm went out on to the terrace, and down the steps, but paused above that on which the body lay. Peter had left his lamp there, and Kennedy switched it on.

The dead man's face was so horribly and unaccountably contorted that he avoided looking at it. There was more blood than he had noted at first. A red, sticky rivulet had touched the dagger. Stooping, Kennedy checked an exclamation.

He had seen something else.

Footprints — marks of high-heeled shoes—showed clearly in the lamp ray!

"My God!" he breathed.

Using his torch, he circled gingerly around the body and examined the lower step. A certain amount of blood had trickled over. There were other, larger, footprints here. Peter's, no doubt.

But there was something else. There

"Oh, my God!" Hilary spoke in a tremulous whisper. "I believe someone else has been killed." Even by torchlight, there was no mistaking the figure

was a tiny lace handkerchief covered with red stains!

Certain of Lord Glengale's words assumed an ominous significance.

Yet—it was unthinkable. Storm Kennedy found himself face to face with a vital decision. He switched off his torch, and put it back in his pocket.

The sound of a slammed car door brought him running around to the courtyard—but not before he had completed his task.

He found the Egyptian preparing to drive away in a smart looking car. Raising his hand, he stepped to the open window from which the man was looking out questioningly.

"Just a moment, if you please."

"Can I assist you in any way, sir?"

"Yes, you can. Be good enough to get out again."

"Perhaps, sir, I misunderstand you?"

"No, you don't. There has been an—accident. I'm afraid no one must leave until the matter has been cleared up."

Mohammed mutinied for a moment. The gazelle eyes flashed a glance which was neither gentle nor genial. Then he obeyed.

"I am at your service, Effendi."

"Thanks," said Kennedy dryly. "If you will wait in the big room, the rest of the guests will be joining you there."

He followed the Egyptian, and as they entered the half lighted, panelled hall, with piled-up trestle tables, chairs and rolled rugs left behind, some under the gallery once designed for minstrels, he saw the glittering brunette coming towards him. She came from the passage which led to the ladies' room. A mink wrap covered her bare shoulders.

She smiled a vague greeting.

"As you have just been outside"—she addressed Kennedy—"please tell me—is there any sign of my chauffeur?"

He noted the accent, the husky voice, easy acceptance of an awkward situation.

"I'm sorry—but there isn't. Where did he go?"

"I lent him to somebody, local, earlier."

"Bad luck. He's probably fogbound."

"But that is terrible! Is someone else going back to town?"

Mohammed crossed his long hands on his breast and bowed.

"I am at Madame's disposal—directly this gentleman gives his consent."

"His consent?"

Dark eyes were raised to Storm Kennedy, pencilled brows slightly lifted.

"I am quite without authority in the matter. There has been—a little trouble."

"Can I help?"

"Thank you. But all you can do will be to wait until the doctor comes."

Kennedy glanced at the Egyptian. He learned nothing.

"The doctor?" It was fascinating, this woman's husky voice. "Then, someone——?"

He said: "Someone has been hurt—badly. I'm sorry to be a nuisance, but I'm just acting for Peter Faraway, who has gone to the call-box."

"Who—is it?"

"No one any of us knows."

A slight breeze had sprung up, and fog was moving like floating cobwebs outside the open windows. The dark woman smiled, pathetically, and shrugged her shoulders, turning away, as Hilary and Miss Elphinstowe came in.

"Well, troops," Miss Elphinstowe remarked gruffly, "what about heading back to camp?"

Hilary's face was a pale mask.

"I'm afraid," Kennedy told her, "we shall all have to stay here a while." But he was watching Hilary. "Someone—a stranger to Peter, and to me—has been killed out there on the terrace."

"Killed?"

The last remnants of colour deserted Hilary's cheeks. There was terror, undisguisable, in her eyes. Storm Kennedy glanced aside to where the Egyptian was talking to the brunette.

"Yes." He turned back to Hilary. "Peter has gone to call the police. The phone here is off duty."

He had looked aside deliberately, but now he detected an exchange of glances between Hilary and Miss Elphinstowe, laden with understanding. Hilary was biting her lip. She lowered her lashes swiftly. It was the elder woman who spoke.

"Male or female?"

"A man. Dark, sunburned. Might have been a good looker. Wavy black hair, with a fleck of grey."

Hilary, performing one of those amazing feats of self control in some way reminiscent of her father, looked Kennedy squarely in the eyes.

"Someone Peter doesn't know? Someone who wasn't at the party?"

"Yes."

Hilary glanced again, a swift glance,

at Miss Elphinstowe, then: "How was he killed?" she asked quietly.

"He was stabbed—with a rather unusual weapon. A small, silver-hilted dagger, the hilt set with amethysts—anyway, they look like amethysts."

She was silent for some moments. She wore a sort of light, fleecy wrap over her frock and her fingers played nervously with the clasp of a black and white bag which she held tightly in her right hand.

"How horrible," she whispered. "I suppose it means we are all prisoners here until the police have——?"

"I'm afraid so. I arrived late, myself, and I was going to offer my services as a pilot back to town."

Hilary thanked him with a smile which was, at once, an acknowledgment of the fact that she liked him and a miracle of courage.

"Looks as though we're all in for a cheery evening," said Miss Elphinstowe. "So the sooner we get matey the better. I'm Miss Elphinstowe to my trades people; Elfie to my friends. You know Hilary. What's your name for short?"

"Bill."

"Now we can get cosy. There isn't a drop left in the bar, there's nowhere to sit down, and I've run out of cigarettes. I suppose"—as Kennedy produced his case—"the next part of the entertainment will be viewing the corpse?"

"I suppose so."

He offered his case to Hilary.

"Thanks, no. I won't smoke."

"I should have hated to miss such a gorgeous party," said Elfie.

And as Kennedy lighted her cigarette, his esteem for Amelia Elphinstowe grew; for he knew that all this was a brave façade which she had built up to shield Hilary.

What were these two women hiding? It was a maddening situation.

Assuming (and he had little data to help him) the dead man to be Hilary's persecutor from whom Lord Glengale had briefed him to protect her, what, in heaven's name, had happened? Granting (again hypothetically) Hilary to be capable of killing a man in just anger, would she have chosen so strange a weapon?

A woman with Hilary Bruton's background doesn't carry a stiletto. Further, where could she have come upon such a thing? It was an Eastern dagger; a short-bladed, ornamental trifle. A powerful blow, skilfully directed, would be necessary to inflict a mortal wound with such a toy.

Against all this, why had she cancelled her journey to Paris and driven on a foggy night to Hangover House? Why had she burst out of that room in a state of wild agitation only a few minutes after the crime had been committed? And whose were the footprints in the dead man's blood?

Whatever had happened—Elfie knew.

He wondered how long it would be before the police and the doctor arrived.

DR. SMITHY stood up, an arresting figure in an island of many lamps around which swirled waves of fog. He was a big man, bald and paunchy. He wore uncommonly large, owl-like glasses and he was dressed in a green pyjama jacket, creased white flannel trousers and bath sandals.

He looked from face to face with a sort of snarling smile; he had very prominent teeth. The stone steps and a space above and below had been roped off by the police. At the moment Dr. Smithy was the only member of the party inside the ropes. Outside, Storm Kennedy stood with Inspector Hawley (chief detective officer from Lychgate) and a uniformed police sergeant.

"Some heavy-footed oaf," said Dr. Smithy with a wolfish grin, "has been paddling about in the bloke's blood. He ought to be shot, whosoever he is."

"Possibly myself, or Peter," Kennedy admitted.

Dr. Smithy ignored the remark.

"All this blood, you know," he went on, "means that there's probably no internal haemorrhage. The blade doesn't seem to have gone far in. Diverted by this rib I imagine. Damn funny."

Peeling off his rubber gloves, he took a packet of cigarettes and a lighter from a hip pocket of his trousers.

"Do you mean, Doctor, that the wound didn't kill him?" Hawley asked.

"Yes—possibly I do."

He lighted a cigarette.

"Complicates things a bit," Kennedy murmured.

"It does," Dr. Smithy agreed, enthusiastically. "It does, my dear sir. It's a frightful muddle. I mean to say, the bloke's all drawn up—tensed. That's damn funny, too. A bloke with a knife in his midriff doesn't act like that. It's not done. It's unethical. Then, there's the ghastly expression on his face. In fact, he looks more like an angina than a stabbing. But we'll know better when we get him on the slab. And now I'll cut back to bed."

KENNEDY turned and walked towards the house. "When your fingerprint man arrives, Inspector," he said, "he will probably find evidence on the hilt of the knife."

"He won't, my dear sir!" Dr. Smithy assured him. "It looks as though the defunct had plucked it out of his own chest. It's bathed in blood. The thing's in a frightful mess."

He was struggling into a topcoat which appeared to be much too small for him, and bestowing a leering grin upon Inspector Hawley.

Hawley called back to the sergeant: "Stand by there, Martin, until the Super arrives."

Inspector Hawley, a pale, cadaverous man who rarely took his hands out of the pockets of a depressed looking raincoat, took them out now and removed a depressing felt hat.

"I'm afraid footprints will be muddled up, too," he remarked. "A lot of people seem to have been trampling about there."

Storm Kennedy glanced aside at the inspector, but his expression conveyed no more than his tone.

The three passed along the terrace before tall french windows which had been closed and draped by Hawley's orders. Kennedy said nothing, but he was thinking a lot.

"You can send for the hearse whenever you like." Dr. Smithy flicked ash from his cigarette. "I'll put my report in."

"Waiting for the Super," Hawley replied gloomily. "I called him at King's Riding."

They went around the angle of the house and through the arched opening into that weedy courtyard, where the doctor's veteran but respectable-looking automobile awaited him. As he plumped his bag inside:

"I mean to say," he remarked, grinning fiercely, "I always thought I should be called here some dirty night." The breeze had freshened. Fog wreaths swept across the porch lights. "This bally old ruin dates back a bit, you know. Must have been lots of murders here. Just the place for that sort of thing."

He ducked into the car, ironically saluted the inspector, and slammed the door.

"Can you find your way in the dark, Doctor?" Hawley called.

"With my eyes shut." Dr. Smithy stuck his bald head out. "A general practitioner has to. Babies have a nasty trick of getting born in the middle of the night. What's more, they favour foggy nights. Vindictive little brats. Cheery ho!"

He drove off into swirling mist.

Storm Kennedy had urgent need of private conversation with Hilary Bruton. It would be a difficult conversation, for she mustn't suspect that he was anything other than a stranded guest, like herself. But, now that he was deeply committed, he must find out the truth, whatever the truth might be. Something more than his reputation, his very liberty, was at stake.

But, since the inquiry had been taken over by Superintendent Croker, opportunities were fewer than ever.

Superintendent Croker, although aroused from his bed at nearly two o'clock in the morning, had, nevertheless, turned up in uniform. He had arrived in a car equipped with a searchlight, preceded by two motor cyclists, and accompanied by a photographer and a fingerprint specialist.

Having established contact with Sergeant Martin, on duty beside the body, conducted a brief personal inspection and set the technicians to work, he made a spectacular entrance into the long, panelled hall where most of the guests trapped in the net were assembled.

He wore his uniform smartly, his silver-edged peaked cap at a jaunty angle. Superintendent Croker had all the self-assurance, and some of the appearance, of the late Benito Mussolini.

Conversation was arrested when he opened the door and raised a gloved hand in a military salute.

"I regret troubling you, ladies and gentlemen, but I'm afraid I must take statements from all those present. . . ."

More than half an hour had elapsed since then. Storm Kennedy had signed a statement—which sorely troubled his conscience. Peter Faraway, the fair youth, and the Egyptian had been called to view the body, and then into the study, requisitioned by the superintendent for this purpose. He was dealing first with the men and reserving the women for dessert.

A POLICE sergeant had just summoned the brunette, whose name, Kennedy had learned, was Mrs. Muller. He thought she looked pale as the man led her out on to the terrace. No wonder. . . .

Hilary, he could no longer doubt, was deliberately avoiding him.

She and Elfie had disappeared some time before, Elfie having thwarted his several attempts to talk to Hilary alone. He knew they couldn't have left the house, for constables were on duty back and front. Yes—Hilary's absence was deliberate.

But he *must* see her, if only for a moment, before Superintendent Croker got her into his clutches. He made a quick survey.

The Egyptian, who had been interrupted whilst reading Mrs. Muller's palm, was talking earnestly to the fair youth. Peter had vanished—no doubt to some

Continued on page 29

Kennedy said softly: "We all have to be careful what we sign." Behind, the Egyptian read Mrs. Muller's palm

The Gangmaster is ready for winter

by KEITH ELLIS

With the fruit crop in, Alf Morris is re-deploying his private army. Latest jobs: spud-lifting, bulb-setting

ALTHOUGH HORSEFAIR is Wisbech's quiet, rather respectable bus station during most of the day, it wears a different aspect at seven o'clock in the morning. Outside a cosy-looking house with a large signboard bearing the legend "A. G. Morris, Licensed Gangmaster," is gathered a small fleet of lorries with green canvas covers and narrow, wooden seats.

Gradually the gangers arrive. Men and women of every age and description, dressed in overalls, khaki drill, head-scarves, climb into the lorries.

"Morning, Alf," they shout as Morris, large and genial, approaches in his shirt-sleeves.

"Morning, Bill. Morning, Paddy. You'll be on potatoes again today." And, turning to the driver, he says: "Home Farm today, Jack."

The gangs are sorted out and the lorries drive off. By half past seven, Morris has dispatched between three and four hundred workers to nearly a score of farmers who rely on him for labour.

Capital—Three Shillings

It was in 1921 that Morris arrived from Grimsby with a wife and a total capital of three shillings. Work was scarce. He was glad to join a gang and earn 3s. 6d. a day for setting potatoes.

One day, dissatisfied with the gangmaster, the farmer called Morris over to him. "Why not start a gang of your own?" he asked.

Morris thought the matter over. On the one hand thirty shillings a week with no signs of a rise, on the other the possibility of building up a prosperous business after a good deal of hard work. He decided.

"I'll take it on," he said.

His first gang was a family affair consisting of his three sisters, two brothers, his wife, his mother and a niece. For transport they borrowed a pony and cart from the farmer. Every night they were given sufficient food to last the pony until morning when they drove it back to the farm.

Morris's next venture was a T-model Ford truck which he bought from a local dealer for fifty shillings. This considerably increased his range but unfortunately, only a short time after acquiring it, he lost the starting-handle. It proved too obsolete to replace.

The truck *could* be started but only with great difficulty. Every morning it could be seen slowly circling round Horsefair whilst late arrivals scrambled on as best they could. When they approached a farm, Morris had to send his brother running ahead to open the gates.

Now, just twenty years later, his ten lorries provide full-time employment for a dozen drivers.

During the harvest season, which stretches from June to October in this part of the country, he stands by from dawn to nightfall to answer emergency calls for workers. The sign "100 potato-pickers wanted tomorrow," chalked on a blackboard, can be seen outside his office every day at this time of the year.

Morris assigns potato pickers. Women get 16s. for seven-hour day

Morris also tours the district with a loudspeaker van. Flower-cutting, bulb-setting, fruit- and potato-picking are a few of the jobs for which he supplies gangs.

Rates of pay, agreed with the trade unions, vary with the work. For a seven-hour day, women are usually paid 14s. but for potato-picking they receive 2s. extra. Men get anything between two and four shillings per day more than this.

Fruit Is Favourite

Piece-rates for fruit-picking are the most popular. It is quite possible for an experienced worker to make £4 a day picking strawberries at 2½d. a pound.

The farmer hands over all the money earned to the gangmaster, who pays out his workers at the end of the week. All work is on a day-to-day basis but in fact Morris can find employment for his regulars through most of the year.

The gangers themselves are of every age and type imaginable. Students, tramps, gipsies and the unemployed take their place beside men and women who have worked in Morris's gangs for almost twenty years. Nationalities include Poles, Hungarians, Germans, Irishmen and two coloured Africans.

Mr. C. H. Abbott, who has been with Morris nineteen years, now has two daughters in the gang.

Another old-stager is seventy-six year old Susan Wenn who has never lost a day's work since she joined Morris in his pony-and-cart days. Always the first to apply when she hears of a new job, she hopes to continue until she is ninety.

At the other end of the scale is fourteen-year-old Helen Andrews. After spending a few weeks in the fields, she has to return to school.

Some of Morris's best workers are what he calls "travelling folk," not gipsies but families who travel from place to place, taking whatever work is in season.

Frank O'Connor, father of a family of eighteen, has brought his clan regularly over the last twenty years for gooseberry and strawberry picking.

Sometimes people come to Morris for work but change their minds when they see what they have to do. Perhaps they hear of a better job. "I've known fifty people on a pea field at eight o'clock. Half an hour later, they've all disappeared."

Thirty unemployed Welsh miners once came to Morris to ask if he could find them work. After a certain amount of trouble, he made arrangements with a farmer thirty miles away near Yarmouth, hired a thirty-two-seater bus and told them to come back next morning.

They had been travelling half an hour when one of them turned to Morris and said, "Give us your cap, Alf." He was surprised to have it returned to him a few minutes later with thirty shillings inside. No more was said and they continued the journey.

When They Got There

When they arrived at the farm, the bailiff was waiting on a black horse. "Take 'em to the field over there, will you?" he asked. When Morris turned round to direct them, he saw them disappearing down a lane.

"Where are you going?" he shouted.

"We're off to Yarmouth," they replied. "Thanks for the lift."

A few months ago, ninety of Morris's women were picking strawberries with a similar number of students from London University. The students were dissatisfied with the payment of twopence a pound and decided to go on strike.

"Before I knew where I was, they'd picketed the field and I had to take my women home to save trouble. But the price was raised to threepence next day," he added.

A gangmaster is defined by an Act of 1867 as "any person, whether male or female, who hires children, young persons or women, with a view to their being employed in agricultural labour on lands not in his own occupation."

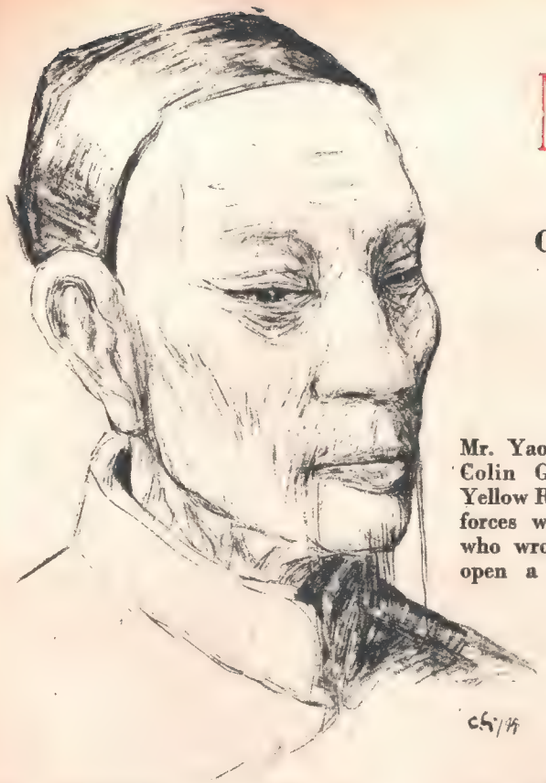
His fees are regulated by the local Agricultural Executive Committee. In the Wisbech area they consist of a shilling a day supervision fee for every worker provided and a pound for every motor vehicle used as transport.

By The Mile

In addition, there is a payment of a shilling a mile for the distance travelled by each truck to and from the work. For all these sums the farmer is responsible.

Every six months the gangmaster has to apply to the council in whose area he is working for a licence costing one shilling. Morris, who sends gangs into Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, needs a separate licence for each.

No children under the age of twelve can be employed. Women cannot be employed in the same gang with men, and in any case must work under a female gangmaster. Morris has solved that difficulty. He has a partner; a life partner. Mrs. Morris is a "gang mistress."



Mr. Yao, drawn by artist Colin Giffard. On the Yellow River, Giffard joined forces with Tony Gibson, who wrote this article, to open a "self-help" clinic

Mr. Yao sees it through

China's Communist tide has swept right up to his gate. But it still has to get round the spirit wall

by ***TONY GIBSON***

"JR CHIH PU YEN; YEN CHIH PU JR"—"Those who know don't speak; those who speak don't know." Most people in China these days have taken that proverb to heart, which explains why it is so very difficult to get plain answers to burning questions.

In the West we find it easier to think along straight lines, neatly dividing the world into those who are for us and those who are not. But Chinese minds are devious. There are no rules of thumb by which the foreigner can guess at Chinese reactions.

Will China be an American "ally," or a Russian "satellite"? A "co-operative trading partner with the Western democracies," or "the champion of the East against the economic penetration of white imperialism"? Does the Communist victory in China mean the dawn of a golden age, or the beginning of a reign of terror?

In the mud-walled market town of Yao-chia, on the North China Plain, a man is living now who knows all the answers. His name is Mr. Yao.

Silence Is Revealing

Following the wisdom of the proverb, he says very little; but even his silence can be revealing. And in his manner of life and the lessons of his experience there are most of the clues that are needed to solve the Chinese puzzle for a long time to come.

The gateway to Mr. Yao's house is barred by a slab of bricks and mortar which lies within the courtyard and across the doorway. This is a "spirit wall." No hostile influence may penetrate the house, for Chinese devils cannot turn corners: like high explosive, their blast is direct.

Mr. Yao's cocksure eldest son, Ji P'ai, was always grumbling at the inconvenience of edging round the wall with every sack of millet to be stored in the courtyard. But Mr. Yao, although he is up to date and no longer believes in country superstitions, is a loyal son nevertheless.

The "spirit wall" has always been there; it was found good by Mr. Yao's fathers in the past; so there it stays.

The house is among the best in the town of Yao-chia—though that does not mean it is much better than the worst. One side of the tiny courtyard is taken up with the gateway; each of the other three sides consists of one big room.

The Best For The Aged

In the plainest sleeps Mr. Yao's Number Two son and his daughter-in-law, and their new baby, and the old aunt whom the family keeps out of charity. Ji P'ai, the Number One son, used to sleep there, too, in the old days. The second room is shared by Mr. Yao and his wife, a placid, work-worn woman, at forty already prematurely aged.

And in the best room of all, facing the gateway, sleeps old Yao, on a fine bed well carved—still in theory at least the master of the family. Nowadays he just sits out in the sunlit doorway, watching his great-grandson play naked in the dust. And sometimes he fondles the great wooden coffin which his son has placed alongside the outer wall so that the old man's mind may be set at rest as he looks forward to his life's end.

The real master of the family is Mr. Yao himself. At forty-five he has not done badly—fifteen acres of farmland of his own, and a good connection as a "middle man" with the nearest city, fifty miles away. While daylight lasts Mr. Yao is quietly busy, out in the fields with his second son, or sitting within his office-bedroom, with his abacus and his ink slab and his brush, assessing crop-yields, and working out the new price levels.

For a countryman, Mr. Yao knows the city pretty well. It is the capital of the province, with nearly a million inhabitants. Mr. Yao has been making a business trip there twice a year almost uninterruptedly since Ji P'ai was born. That must be nearly twenty-five years ago.

For the best part of those twenty-five years Mr. Yao's uncle had been building up a prosperous little syndicate. On its behalf he commuted between the capital and the great seaport of Shanghai. Through his nephew, Mr. Yao, and other local farmers, the syndicate bought futures on the village crops, paying low prices in hard cash at the two seasons of planting and coming in at harvest time to dispatch the crops to the rich black markets of the East China Coast.

Copying The Foreigners

Uncle Yao, being used to the rich living and the fast thinking of the city, was much spryer than his elder brother back in the courtyard in Yao-chia. Besides, Uncle Yao was acquainted with the foreigners and, though he did not exactly admire their unquiet, hustling spirit, he found it useful and profitable to emulate them. Like them, he had many irons in the fire.

Years back he acquired an asthmatic ten horse-power engine from a firm in Sheffield, and installed it in a factory converting peanuts into cooking oil and cattle cake, to be resold at profitable city prices. And in his travels up and down the railway he found time to act as concessionaire through three provinces for an American oil company.

Dealing so often with the foreigners, he passed on a thing or two to his nephew about their usefulness and their limitations. He valued the Sheffield engine, but would like to have seen a Chinese syndicate formed to exploit China's oil resources instead of selling to the profit of the Americans.

New Ideas Cause Trouble

Mr. Yao himself is less concerned with these complex economic questions. He shares his uncle's mild amusement at the foreigners' enormous noses and their capacity to grow hair all over their faces, like the wild savages that border Tibet. But there have been other, more disquieting, signs of foreign influence.

In fact, you might say it was foreign ideas that caused all the trouble over Ji P'ai. Three years ago, after a long period of desperately careful economy, Mr. Yao had saved enough to send Ji P'ai to the Provincial University — to study and gain "face." Everything went wonderfully until Ji P'ai came back to celebrate the New Year Festival.

The day before he was due to leave again, it happened that the district magistrate was sending round his routine questionnaire under the Nationalist Government's "Thought Control" scheme. Merely a formality, of course—for one had only to sign

Peasants rest in a Chinese village square. "Thought Control" may be ended but the new plans have somehow to adapt themselves to the old patterns

Mr. Yao's spirit wall. Like bomb blast, Chinese devils cannot turn corners

the appropriate declaration of loyalty —and that was that. But to Mr. Yao's horror, Ji P'ai refused.

It appeared that at the university there were West textbooks, full of all sorts of unwelcome and seditious ideas —written by Lenin, and Abraham Lincoln, and Lord Beveridge and such-like. And they had infected the young man's mind.

The policeman who brought the questionnaire was squared for the moment (though at considerable cost) but Ji P'ai returned unrepentant to his studies. From that moment Mr. Yao saw that events were out of his control. Filial piety had lost its power.

Three months later, things came to a head. Mr. Yao heard the story later, on the last visit he made to his uncle's house. It appeared that the students of the university had declared a strike. They said it was in protest against the corruption of the Nationalist Government, and the civil war.

Their strike had been timed to coincide with that of other universities. Ji P'ai and his friends, a thousand strong, marched up and down the streets carrying paper banners.

Petition To The Governor

Ordinary people, knowing no better, cheered them on, and the demonstrators ended up by presenting a grandiose petition to the Provincial Governor. After this they dispersed in peace, rather proud of their great achievement.

And then, three days later, the Governor struck. The university campus was cordoned off with barbed wire, and armed political police marched in, beating some of the students and arresting others. Two were killed on the spot.

Ji P'ai, luckily for him, happened to be out, got warning, and ran away to the north-west. No one heard of him again—until this summer.

And then, a couple of months ago, Ji P'ai came home to Yao-chia. Not as his father had expected, a returned prodigal praying for the paternal forgiveness. No, Ji P'ai has come back as a Party member to represent the Communist régime in Yao-chia.

In the last twelve months, the civil war has ceased to be a distant, half-understood amalgam of rumours and counter-rumours. The fighting has swept through the Province, along the main east-west and north-south railway lines, until the Communists converged on the capital.

They've Come To Stay

At first Uncle Yao and most of his foreign friends dismissed them as "Red bandits," out merely to disrupt communications and to loot supplies. But six months ago they occupied the capital for good, and spread out over the Province, ousting the district magistrate from his *yamen*, and setting up their own civil government.

The all-powerful Provincial Governor was caught and killed as he tried to escape hidden in a peasant's dung-cart. The magistrate has been stripped of his possessions, "squeeze" and all. Old Uncle Yao, shrewder than most, realized his assets and got out while the going was good.

Some of the foreigners went off, too. But, rather to Mr. Yao's suprise, not all of them. A good many, particularly the British — missionaries, teachers, even a few merchants—have stayed on.

They find their own movements severely restricted—there is not the "pull" over ordinary Chinese which "foreign faces" used to give them. And the new administration is rather pointedly reminding them that they were friends of the corrupt (and defeated) Nationalists.

But they are allowed to stay on, nevertheless, and their goods and persons are protected almost as scrupulously as those of the administration.

Mr. Yao still makes his trips to the provincial capital, in spite of all the changes. Now that Uncle Yao has slipped his cable, there is no one else to administer the peanut oil factory. The Communists have no one to spare. So they have offered Government loans at attractive interest rates to "native capitalists" to get them to put the factories back into production.

Mr. Yao is far too shrewd a man to pass up that kind of opportunity, and nowadays, what with keeping an eye on the factory, and negotiating with the city grain authorities on behalf of Yao-chia, his visits to and fro are likely to be more frequent than ever.

But a few months ago, when Ji P'ai took over Yao-chia on behalf of the Communists, Mr. Yao and his neighbours did not know what to think. The first sign of the new dispensation was when, two days after his arrival, Ji P'ai summoned a town meeting.

It took place around the threshing floor, where in times past Mr. Yao and his friends met during the long summer evenings to smoke their long bamboo pipes in tranquillity, and to pass slow comment on the affairs of Yao-chia. But this time there were no distinctions of age or sex. Everybody had to attend, even the women.

The meeting was a *tou-chang*, a mass judgment. The town administered lynch law to anyone who happened to be unpopular. Rather to his surprise, Mr. Yao came off quite well.

Dividing Up The Land

Some of the others were less fortunate; one old man, who used to prostitute the wife of one of his tenants, was driven out of Yao-chia with blows; and one of Mr. Yao's own tenants, on mere suspicion of spying for the Nationalist troops, was shot.

When the judgments were over, came the second shock. Mr. Yao found himself elected to the town council.

Under Ji P'ai's guidance all the land holdings of Yao-chia were redivided; in the new scheme Old Yao got exactly the same share as Mr. Yao's baby grandson. Still, it all seems to be working out much the same in the end. The Yao family is left with nearly as many acres as it used to have, and Mr. Yao, being the brains of the family, continues to be the real master.

Mrs. Yao and daughter-in-law go shopping. Western ideas have meant the end of the power of filial piety

For his part, Mr. Yao is as discreet, and as independent, as ever. The Thought Control forms of the defeated Nationalists have been abolished, but it appears that the Communists are just as closely interested in private thoughts—and rather more efficient at penalizing their critics.

From time to time bulletins about the world outside are chalked up on a blackboard "newspaper" beside the threshing floor. Mr. Yao reads it to see whether the foreign diplomats have woken up to what has been happening in Yao-chia and elsewhere, and are recognizing the new Government.

The Family Town

The sooner the better, thinks Mr. Yao; it is really high time one was able to send to Sheffield for spare parts to fit that peanut engine.

In Yao-chia, one does not concern oneself for very long with the outside world and the shifting ground of affairs. Yao-chia means "the Yao family town" and Mr. Yao is proud his roots run deep. His is one of the yeoman families—the *lao pei hsing*—the "old hundred names," the Smiths, Browns and Robinsons of China.

There have always been Yaos in Yao-chia, and no doubt there always will be. At his life's end Mr. Yao's coffin will be edged round the "spirit wall," and through the gateway, to be carried down the winding street to the fields which his ancestors farmed.

Afterwards—who knows? For Mr. Yao, the gods in their dilapidated shrine at the end of the town mean less and less. He dismisses them with another proverb: "To know man is difficult, how then can we know the gods?"

But the study of man, if difficult, Mr. Yao finds absorbingly interesting. His father, brooding in the sunlight, can only bewail the conventions that are dead. His sons, working out in the fields by day, and talking politics far into the night, are ready to swallow everything, without pausing to digest.

China's Middle-men

But Mr. Yao, the "middle-man" between the old China and the new, notices how the new ideas have to adapt themselves to the old patterns. The land may be "communized"—but it has to pass again into private ownership once it has been shared.

The Western world is being cold-shouldered for the moment, but the foreigners still teach in their schools. The new government is determined to control "native capitalists," but it does not attempt to liquidate them.

Mr. Yao discerns the strange new forces which advance inexorably upon his home, and he knows that neither "spirit walls" nor filial piety can keep them out. But, for all that, the new forces cannot blast their way through; they must edge themselves round the wall of tradition.

On the farther side of that wall stands Mr. Yao; politely hospitable, in the proper attitude of Chinese courtesy—waiting with patient curiosity to welcome the new world in.

MINER WHO'S HIS OWN BOSS

by HENRY FIRTH

He knew the coal was there for the taking. But getting it out meant a long battle of one man against a mountain

IN GELLI—FOUR HARD lines ruled along the dark trough of the Rhondda—they call him Tom Aldridge, the Private Enterprise Man. But their Welsh tongues are in their cheeks when they say it because, for all he's a coalowner now, Tom Aldridge, they know, is one of them.

Tom may live these days in Gelli's largest house—with a bell in every room—but he's still the same Tom Aldridge who was born in the next street and went down the mine with the rest as a kid, whose stepfather and uncles were all miners, whose father was killed in a roof-fall when he was two.

During the 1921 stoppage, Tom sold newspapers and held the chain-horse that helped the Taff Vale Railway's goods-trolley up the steep slopes. And if a sheep got "lost" in the streets, he wasn't above lending a hand, for there were other sheep, and men were starving. Those were bitter days.

Strike Started It All

Nevertheless, it was a strike—the General Strike of 1926—that set in train the slow and arduous process which finally transmuted Tom Aldridge, collier, into Tom Aldridge, the Private Enterprise Man, the proprietor of the "biggest little coal mine in South Wales."

For, as it had to many another, forced idleness came to Tom Aldridge as a challenge and an opportunity. On the way to the Tonypandy Labour Exchange to sign on one day, he heard that a certain old "Model T" Ford lorry that had been "eating its head off" in a garage was up for sale.

The owners turned out to be two old spinsters. They asked £5. But Tom Aldridge pointed out that with his dole, he could only raise £3 10s. This they agreed to accept, though somewhat reluctantly.

Thus dramatically emancipated from wage slavery, Tom Aldridge drove his ancient vehicle home in triumph. There was still the petrol and oil to buy, but his parents helped all they could. He got a job or two from local builders, a bit of carting from the council.

It was a start.

In 1930 the old Ford ran away with a load of stone down the mountainside. Tom Aldridge managed to jump clear but the lorry smashed up at the bottom.

Soon Gelli was talking about Tom Aldridge's bright, brand new lorry, the lorry he was buying on hire purchase from the firm up in London, in the Old Kent Road. A new chapter had opened. It was Tom Aldridge, haulage contractor, now.

In a year there was another lorry.

The great depression had hit the Rhondda. In the grim little towns strung out along the valley, three-quarters of the men were out of work.

He Moved Whole Families

The daughters and younger sons went off to find jobs in England. They were the advance parties. The fathers and mothers and the household goods followed.

Tom Aldridge moved them. "Between 1934 and 1938," he says, "there was many a week when I moved three families out of the Rhondda. I did a thousand miles a week."

To the second lorry was added a third—and a fourth.

The war brought, among other things, plenty of work for haulage contractors—and no quibbling about price. Tom Aldridge's lorries carried bits of guns from the Bridgend Arsenal, munitions from the Royal Ordnance Factory near Cardiff.

They criss-crossed the sands at Penclawdd carrying materials for the making of a naval gunnery range. They appeared in American Army camps all over the south.

By the end of the war Tom Aldridge had ten lorries.

Then, when all seemed set fair, misfortune struck. Tom went down with a gangrenous appendix. It looked as though all heavy work would be out.

Nearly Bought A Hotel

Regretfully, he sold the haulage business and planned to buy a hotel at Weston-super-Mare.

But once again enforced idleness was to bring its challenge. Looking out from a high point above Gelli you could count thirty mines that had closed down.

They had closed down because, the owners said, they had ceased to pay. Yet there was more coal in the valley still than had ever come out of it. Fine coal, too.

Tom Aldridge's mind went back to the strikes of 1921 and 1926. The mountainsides had been covered with miners grubbing for coal. They brought it down in buckets for their fires, sold it for cigarettes or beer.

Aldridge and his cronies had located a fine four-foot seam in a neighbouring wood. They had worked it till the landowner planted dynamite and blew the place in.

The coal still lay there for the digging. And coal had become the nation's lifeline. Every ton helped.

But coal was nationalised now. The matter, surely, would have to be "referred to the appropriate authority"—to the national board, or the divisional board, or the area board.

It seemed a pity. But Aldridge was not put off. He made inquiries. Provided he did not employ more than thirty men and received due sanction for his plans it was still possible, he found, for a man to start a mine.

David v. Goliath

Tom Aldridge, the Private Enterprise Man versus the National Coal Board, a Welsh David against the English Goliath! It had an appeal, man!

Aldridge wrote to Cardiff, to the Small Mines Department which supervises thirty or so such small undertakings through South Wales. Then the Town and Country Planning Ministry had to intervene. The woods, it pointed out, would be part of a National Park. A coal mine would destroy the amenities.

Tom Aldridge was not disheartened;

Coal streams out of the mine the experts said could never pay. With faith in his hunch, Tom bought trams and horses from the Coal Board

he remembered the old Bwllfa Ddu Level up on the mountain where he'd worked as a boy. There had been plenty of coal still there when the colliery had closed down twenty-five years ago.

But the workings he now found had been idle too long. It would have needed too much work to restore them. The strange pursuit of prospecting for coal in the Rhondda continued.

Finally, 2,400 feet up in the mountain, in the labyrinthine workings of the old Maindy Level, Aldridge found what he had been seeking. Here was plenty of first-class coal in a six-foot seam. The roof was solid rock. "Just like the Cheddar Caves," says Aldridge.

But when they saw the place, the engineers shook their heads doubtfully. There might be strata trouble. There might be water trouble.

Aldridge backed his miner's hunch. Once again an application went in to the Small Mines Department—and this time it was accepted.

The new labours of Hercules were about to begin.

Going to work to get the place in order with a couple of men, Aldridge bought some "surplus" trams from the Coal Board and a couple of pit horses to pull them.

The horses were "bad" ones the Board said they could do nothing with. But they worked fine for Aldridge. Maybe they were just individualists, too.

Built His Own Road

It was one thing to get the coal out of the mountain: quite another to deliver it to the railway at the bottom of the valley. The colliery had used a steep incline, half a mile long, fitted with rail tracks. But when Aldridge applied to the N.C.B. for permission to use this, he was refused.

Aldridge found himself with tons of coal at the top of a mountain. But he was not the man to let a thing like that bother him. He would, he decided, build a road—a mile and a quarter down the mountain.

He got a few men together, called in a surveyor to give him his points, and started in. It was tough work up there, cutting into the side of the mountain. It was winter and the hailstones were as big as marbles and stung nearly as sharply.

As the road crept on, Aldridge went to a Ministry of Supply sale at Sevenoaks and bid for five ex-Army vehicles with caterpillar tracks to carry the coal down the road.

By now Aldridge's life-savings were disappearing at an alarming rate. The road had cost £1,000.

"Didn't you feel like turning it in?" I said, as we stood at the top of the mountain and looked down on the road, snaking away like those pictures we used to see of the Burma Road.

"No," he said. "You see I'd worked up here and I knew the coal was there all right. It was only a question of how much time and how much money before we would get it.

"But driving up the mountain in the caterpillar in the mornings, with the cold wind bringing tears into my eyes, I do remember thinking to myself: 'Tom, a man needs a heart like a lion to tackle a job like this.'"

After six months the road was finished and the coal came rocking down into the valley. But it was a slow job, for each "caterpillar" carried very little. Tom Aldridge went back to the auctions and bought a great four-wheel-drive lorry.

But getting that monster up and down the mountain was no child's game—especially when the winter rains washed the road. The mountain was still the enemy.

At this point Tom Aldridge had luck. Officials at the Coal Board office looked again at the incline with the rail tracks and said he could now use it.

Engineers Were Doubtful

The incline worked with a "balance sheave," using the weight of five loaded trams going down to pull five empty ones up. But the balance sheave had not been used for years. Once again, the engineers shook their heads.

And once again Aldridge and his men rolled up their sleeves and got down to it. All Gelli discussed the odds as it watched them going off each day up the mountain. Another £1,000 disappeared.

The day before the job was finished, a gang of young hooligans broke into the engine house and smashed the place up.

But on May 3 the first three loaded trams came down the mountain, drawing up the first three empties.

That gave the scoffers something to think about. Tom Aldridge took great satisfaction in that. "Down here," he says, "they have a way of thinking that because a boy is born between two mountains he can't have any brains.

"If it had been Tom Aldridge from London, it would have been, oh, he's a clever fellow. But Tom Aldridge from Gelli. . . ."

Now, with the trams rumbling up and down the mountain, the way was clear to step up output. And, fortunately, the experts' misgivings had proved unfounded. The water was draining away naturally. The roof was firm and fine still.

The day Tom Aldridge took me rocketing up the long, steep road he had built he had just taken on two more men. That made ten. And, though the coal had to be got out the old way with pickaxe and sledge-hammer and cunning, there was no "absenteeism."

"Choose efficient men," says Aldridge. "See conditions are right and that they haven't a grouse. Then put the appreciation in the pay packet—and you'll get results."

Output was more than fifty tons a week and now, with the new loading ramp down on the siding, they were hoping soon to hit the hundred.

"There's two million tons of coal ahead of us," says Tom. "A square mile of coal. More than we shall get out in a lifetime. There's a fortune up there in the mountain."

What is Tom Aldridge's secret; how does he find a fortune where the colliery company found a loss?

£11-a-week Colliers

It isn't low wages. His men are all trade unionists. Some of them top £11 a week. Then there's ninepence a ton royalty to pay to the National Coal Board.

There are two answers perhaps. One is that Tom has cut himself off a good slice from an indifferent joint. In the bit of the old mine that he's taken over conditions favour low costs.

The second answer is the familiar business answer: overheads, the costs that go on all the time.

Tom Aldridge, the Private Enterprise Man, has no official heirarchy, hardly any organization. Here is a "coalowner" who goes up himself to see that the horses are fed.

"We're all producers here," he says. "That's what this country needs. England's like a well these days. All taking out and none putting in. . . ."

And the future? With coal so highly priced and competition returning now for foreign markets, Tom Aldridge is afraid the demand for coal may sag. But he's not worrying.

Because his coal is highly volatile Rhondda No. 2, and because it's won with hand and pick, it's a lot cleaner than most of our coal. It's the only house coal left now in the upper half of the Rhondda—though at present it's allocated to Margam, on the coast, where by 1952 they'll have the biggest steel works in Europe.

He's Shown Them All

They still have their little jokes about the "new coalowner" in Gelli, but these days Tom Aldridge can afford to laugh with them. For he's shown, as he wanted to show, that a local boy can have a go and make good.

But there are satisfactions even deeper than that which comes when a man pits himself against a mountain. These days Tom Aldridge eats all his rations. Gangrenous appendix and Weston-super-Mare hotel are far behind.

"There's not a fitter man in the country," he says. "I'll live another ten years longer now, you'll see, man."

John Bull colour photograph by William Kemp

Tom Aldridge starts another day. His secret? "We're all producers"

ONLY ONE THING LASTS

by WILL SCOTT

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

Betty wanted fame. Ben wanted a wife. Mrs. Crabtree wanted to do her best for everyone. Then along came the film agent. He wanted something quite different

Betty said: "Ben, sweet, supposing I *am* a new Garbo?" He said glumly: "I hope he thinks you're as ugly as sin"

BEN, TRYING TO MAKE his way backstage against the crowds leaving the Parish Hall, prepared to go on where he and Betty had left off.

Somewhere behind the lowered curtain, earls and countesses and comic waiters and extravagantly dressed villagers were discarding their titles and tiaras, their vermilion cheeks and scarlet noses, and turning themselves back into staid citizens and housewives, clerks and shop assistants, ready for Monday morning.

The Edendale Amateur Theatrical Club's third and most successful production was over. The limelight was being turned off for another twelve months.

But not, as Ben found when he was through the pass door, completely.

"Ben," Betty whispered, over an armful of flowers and boxes of chocolates, "guess what Mr. Cumberland has just said?"

Mr. Cumberland might be a professional stage director of the widest experience, with an ability to handle amateurs which amounted to genius. But to Ben Mr. Cumberland was a dull man with only Mr. Cumberland as a topic of conversation. Ben, therefore, left it to Betty to tell him.

"He said I ought to take up the stage professionally!"

"He did, did he?" Smilingly the club's house manager took the Hon. Lettice, the earl's youngest daughter, by the elbow. "Time you changed, darling," he said.

"But, Ben—did you hear? He says I've got everything it takes. He says I ought to get to the very top."

"I told you you'd got everything before Cumberland ever set eyes on you," he reminded her. "Now run along and change out of the Hon. Lettice. There's a moon. We can go out to Easter Ferry and back before the rest of them are through telling each other how marvellous they were. I'll get the car."

ON the way to Easter Ferry he turned and looked at her. She had said nothing for five minutes. Her head was back on a cushion. She was staring at the stars. Suddenly she said it had been one of the most wonderful weeks she had ever known. He realized that the Hon. Lettice was still at his side.

"You're not getting ideas?"

"About what?"

"About taking it up professionally."

"It's not as if I've been told," said Betty, "that my shorthand is perfect or that I bake pretty little cakes better than the neighbours or sew like no girl ever did. When a man of Mr. Cumberland's eminence——"

"Damn Mr. Cumberland and his eminence!"

"You might," said Betty, "think of me."

"I am thinking," said Ben, "of *us*."

His argument, punctuated by cross-roads and one stop for petrol, and lasting all the way to Easter Ferry, was so simple that without the personal bits it need not have lasted a mile.

He was, he pointed out, a bank clerk. One day, with luck, he'd be a bank manager. A small-town bank manager. He'd want a wife. He'd want Betty. He thought they'd settled all that.

And no man could manage a small-town bank as "Miss de Vere's husband." It could not hope to work, and marriage had at least to hope to work from the very start if it was going to hope to work to the end.

"We're both small-town people," said Ben. "We have always been small-town people. And happy, too. There's nowhere like Edendale, we've always agreed. No doubt a pearl gets more of the limelight when you take it from its

oyster and stick it in a ring, but is it a happier pearl?"

Betty said that sounded silly.

Ben said Mr. Cumberland wasn't everybody and the wisest people could make mistakes. The professional stage wasn't starving for actresses. Sometimes it was the actresses who did the starving.

The next day was Sunday. They went to Nicholas Bay and had lunch at the Seven Silver Fishes. The season was near its end and the dining-room was empty.

WAITING for lunch, they had sherry in the lounge. Mrs. Crabtree, three-chinned and round and not far short of sixty, controlled the Seven Silver Fishes. She was a jolly woman who called Betty her dear and even laughed at that.

There was a picture on the wall of the lounge, an old photograph of an elderly lady. Already it was browning at the edges. Thirty-five years in the sun, Mrs. Crabtree explained, seeing Betty's interest, does no photograph any good.

"Thirty-five years!" said Betty.

"It was taken in 1914. Just before the first war broke out."

Betty looked at the old photograph again. "What a sweet old lady," she said. "That's how I'd like to grow old. She's got everything I'd want at her age—looks, intelligence, humour, serenity, dignity. And as slim as she must have been in her twenties. Who was she?"

"Lucy Lannigan," said Mrs. Crabtree.

"Who," Betty asked meekly, "was Lucy Lannigan?"

"I was," said Mrs. Crabtree.

Betty had a third look at the old portrait. "But—she must have been sixty *then*."

"She was sixty. Just." Mrs. Crabtree held her sides. "That was Lucy Lannigan in the third act of *Across the Years*. I was Sylvia Herne. Oh, I don't expect you to have heard the name, my dear. That was long before your time. It was on everybody's lips then, but that's all over. That sort of fame doesn't last."

"Ah!" exclaimed Ben.

"Only one thing does last," said Mrs. Crabtree, "and you don't need any limelight for that. You're better without it. I broke a tour to get married. I never went back. I knew what was coming. It always comes. Like the fame, the looks they pay the money for don't last."

She looked at the old photograph and began laughing once more.

"*Then* where are you?" she said. "Stay on and you break your heart. I didn't let it happen to me. I got out. Henry—my husband—said, 'Somehow, I'll manage to keep you, my dear.'"

"Of course I've only done amateur shows," said Betty. "But our director says——"

"Well, it's a nice life," said Mrs. Crabtree. "If you're young—and lucky—and up top—and haven't got anything better to do. I liked it. But I'm glad I got out."

That was where Ben broke in with what Betty called his "small-town line." The arguments he'd put before Betty he now put before Mrs. Crabtree, seeing, he thought, alliance in her eyes. Betty cut it short by reminding him that they oughtn't to waste Mrs. Crabtree's time.

There was no door between the lounge and the dining-room, only a wide arch. Mrs. Crabtree heard snatches of talk from Ben and Betty's table during the next quarter of an hour. Her face grew thoughtful.

When the young people were ready to go, she said: "I don't know much about the theatre today. Thirty years is a long time; you lose touch. But Septimus K. Ransom is a great friend of mine, and he's often down here at week-ends. I don't suppose the name means anything to you. About as much as Sylvia Herne, perhaps. But they take his advice very seriously. He knows everybody in all the studios."

"Films!" Betty exclaimed.

"I could let you know the next time he'll be here and you could come, too. If he says you've got a chance you've *got* a chance. Leave me your address."

She took a little yellow card from a drawer, wrote the address on it and tucked it away behind the cash register.

As they drove away, Mrs. Crabtree said to herself, "I hope I'm doing the right thing."

Ten miles later Betty turned and looked at Ben. She put her hand on his arm and resumed a broken-off theme.

"But it needn't be for *life*, Ben. I could get out in time. Like Mrs. Crabtree did."

"In her case," said Ben, "her Henry was waiting for her."

"Oh!"

The theme was broken off again.

Presently Ben pulled in the car to the side of the road, under a wide tree, and switched off the engine.

"This," he said, "is the whole point, as it seems to me. You've been a hit in the little local shows and I haven't. I'm pretty smart at figures and you're not. But our wonderful talents are just a detail. In all ordinary things we are ordinary people."

"But, Ben——"

"Since the night we first met—which you appear to be forgetting—we've *balanced*. We've kept the see-saw level—and a whole lot depends on that, if you only realized. But the moment one of us becomes *extra*ordinary the balance is gone. Then everything is gone. You may not believe it now——"

BETTY pleaded: "*Dar*ling! I'm only going to *meet* him. He won't whisk me off on the spot."

"And if he takes the same line as that fool Cumberland and tries to persuade you that you're the second Garbo?"

"Ben, my sweet," said Betty. "Just between ourselves. With nobody listening. Supposing I *am* the second Garbo? It's got to happen to somebody. Just supposing?"

"Personally, if you'll forgive me, Betty," said Ben, "I hope he thinks you uglier than sin!"

The next day Mrs. Crabtree was saying again that she hoped she was doing the right thing. This time it was on the telephone. Later, she glanced at an address on a little yellow card behind the cash register and began to write a letter.

Ben and Betty were first at the Seven Silver Fishes, Betty dancing-eyed and trying to conceal her nervousness, Ben quiet and a little grim and keeping himself in the background.

Mrs. Crabtree said that Mr. Septimus K. Ransom was late.

"When he does come," she said to Betty, "what I *don't* want you to do is to talk theatre or pictures to him."

"I thought——" Betty said.

"He gets so weary of 'shop,' you see," Mrs. Crabtree explained. "He'll think I've been talking, and he comes here to escape. It will be best if I simply put you at the same table and leave you together. For a start, at any rate. If he thinks you've got something he's looking for he'll very soon tell you."

Mr. Septimus K. Ransom proved to be a very fat man. He worked his way out of his car, shook himself, wheezed and came into the hotel.

He vaguely accepted Ben and Betty after a vague introduction, and soon he and Betty and Mrs. Crabtree were all talking together. Ben still kept himself in the background.

It seemed natural that the three should share a table in the lonely dining-room. Mr. Ransom did most of the talking, about any other subject under the sun than his own profession until, the last plate removed, he swung round, pointed his cigarette at Ben and said suddenly:

"You will forgive me, I trust, if I introduce the personal note, but have you ever thought of the pictures?"

Ben gaped rudely. But Mr. Ransom gave him no time to ask questions.

"It happens to be my business, and I always have to keep my eyes open. Can't afford to let somebody else slip in while I'm nodding. So I never nod."

Ben looked at Betty, his eyebrows lifting. Betty looked at Ben, the colour going from her cheeks. They both looked at Mr. Septimus K. Ransom.

"And if you'll allow me to say so," Mr. Ransom went on, still keeping his cigarette pointed at Ben, "there's a chance you've got something. We want new faces. New *sorts* of faces. I've been watching you for the last quarter-hour. I'd like to see what the camera did to you. I'd like a test."

"*Me?*" said Ben.

Betty's neck was pink. She looked as though she would never be able to move again.

"If," Mr. Ransom added, turning with his most engaging smile, "your very charming young lady could spare you to fame."

"Thanks," said Ben. "For the moment I could hardly—that is—I mean, I'm sorry, but no."

"*No?*" gasped Mr. Ransom. He took Ben by the arm and led him into the garden.

Presently Mrs. Crabtree came in. Her first glance showed the waving arms of Mr. Ransom and the stubborn head of Ben above a bed of tall chrysanthemums. "Seppy!" she called. "You're wanted on the phone."

When the two men returned from the garden there was a beaten air about Mr. Septimus K. Ransom.

"This is outside my experience," he sighed. "Young man, you'll think this over?"

"I'm sorry," said Ben.

"Never—never, in all my——"

"Seppy," said Mrs. Crabtree. "Phone."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Septimus K. Ransom, and went out through the arch.

"IT'S time we were getting along," said Ben, nervously. "If you'd kindly give Mr. Ransom my thanks again and say goodbye to him for us. He won't listen to me. If you're ready, Betty."

They went down to the empty beach and sat in the sunshine on an old breakwater. Betty, staring at a far-away sail, said:

"Well, go on—laugh!"

"I have never felt less like it," said Ben.

"Ben, ..."

"H'm?"

"It hardly seems real that you said 'no'."

"A screen test? Me?" said Ben. "I'd never have lived it down."

"But if you'd really wanted?"

He turned in a half circle and stared at her.

"But, good Lord! All that talk of mine about balance and keeping the see-saw level—you didn't imagine it was just *talk*, did you? The argument was the same for both sides. It had to be, unless I meant nothing by it and it was just an argument. And believe me, I meant the lot."

He pulled her hand into his.

"We're Edendale. We stay Edendale. The argument's over."

In the Seven Silver Fishes Mrs. Crabtree was congratulating Mr. Septimus K. Ransom on carrying out her secret instructions very well. "Though what would have happened if he *had* been any use in pictures, I do not know," she said. "After the way you talked to him."

"Sylvia, my dearest old friend," said Mr. Septimus K. Ransom patiently. "Can't you, after all these years, tell when I'm play-acting and when I'm not? Of *course* he'll be of use in pictures. And I want to land him. Where's he gone? How can I contact him?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Seppy," said Mrs. Crabtree. "He's only been here once before, and I don't know where he comes from. *I* can't tell you how to get in touch with him."

And during the afternoon she took a little yellow card from behind the cash register and tore it into bits.

THE HUMAN MACHINE

Paying the Price

THERE'S an old piece of wisdom that goes: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

Kipling re-stated it in one of his poems:

"The wisest thing, we suppose, that a man can do for his land,
Is the work that lies under his nose, with the tools that lie under his hand."

Despite the agitators, and all who claim to know a short cut to the millenium, men have never escaped from that idea of simple duty.

Anything worth while can only be got by paying its price. You can't even enjoy leisure unless it has been earned by effort.

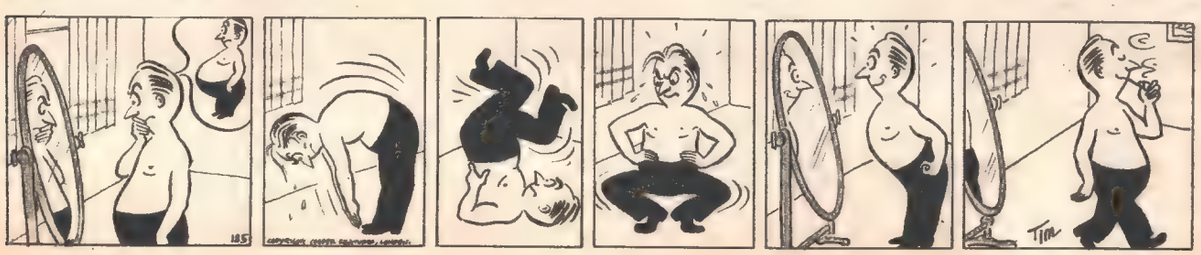
To moan continually that the world is out of joint will never remedy anything.

In the end, the world belongs to those who enjoy it.

by ROFFE THOMPSON

OH, JOHNNY!

by TIM



Dance night at club. English members are restricted to one-third of total. Half the members are coloured

THE WORLD COMES TO SUBURBIA

by IAN BEVAN

Students of fifty-three nations travel home to Croydon every night. They're members of one man's private U.N.

FIFTY STUDENTS FROM China, arriving in London late one night with no one to meet them and nowhere to go, might be said to constitute a problem in anyone's language, but not to the junior Foreign Office man who was called on recently to cope with this very situation.

He took the Chinese to Victoria, bought them tickets to East Croydon, gave them careful directions for finding 20 Addiscombe Grove, which is about two minutes' walk from the station, and that was that.

Almost as an afterthought he rang Terence Driscoll, who lives at that address, and said: "I say, old boy, I've just sent you fifty Chinese. I suppose you'll be able to bed 'em and feed 'em all right."

By midnight Driscoll had fed them ("Plain English food, but they ate plenty of it"), put them to bed ("Some on the billiard table, some in the baths, some stretched out along the corridor")—and another international crisis was happily resolved.

Such crises are more or less routine in Driscoll's life, for he is the founder, manager and proprietor of the International Language Club, a students' hostel whose name is better known in such parts of the world as Sierra Leone and Nigeria than that of any other landmark in England, not excepting Big Ben and the Tower of London.

Driscoll, himself, is a single-minded idealist with a demon's capacity for work, a genius for organization, a talent for inspiring enthusiasm in others, and a truly frightening determination to carry out his plans no matter what obstacles are in the way.

People who work with him believe that one day he will be as famous among the world's students as Cecil Rhodes, and that may well prove true.

Although he lacks a fortune to found scholarships, he aims to fill an important gap in English student life by building a hostel at Croydon bigger than International House in New York (which has room for 600 students) and the Cité Universitaire in Paris (with 2,500).

In eleven years, using ordinary suburban houses for accommodation, and without any Government or charitable subsidy, he has created a student centre almost as big as the lavishly endowed International House.

Eventually he hopes to have new buildings housing 3,000 students and 600 staff. They would cost at least £2,000,000, but Driscoll is not worried about money. He bought his first house with a legacy from his grandmother and, by astute management, he has multiplied that into thirty-eight houses worth £200,000, so he hopes the banks would regard him as a fair risk.

All Belongs To Him

All the property belongs to him as an individual, although ultimately he plans to make everything over to a charitable trust. At present he finds personal ownership helps him to steamroller his way through restrictions and regulations.

Never a student himself and, in fact, seldom given to reading anything more academic than a detective story, he is none the less devoted to students, whom he regards as a sadly abused class. He is particularly sorry for those who come to London from overseas.

"Why should they have to live in sordid places like Soho and Bloomsbury?" he asks. "They are never invited into decent homes. The only people they meet are prostitutes. They go home bitter about the English and disillusioned about our way of life."

While the percentage of students who make the acquaintance of prostitutes is probably no higher than the percentage of any other class, he is right in saying that many overseas students lead a lonely and depressing life in London.

"Nobody has troubled to fight their cause for the past hundred years," says Driscoll. "The honour has fallen to me in a big way. I shall fight and I shall never give up. Nothing will stop me."

Nothing has stopped him so far in a project which is unfortunately unique.

In February, 1938, over sherry and fruit cake which he was providing for friends in celebration of his twenty-seventh birthday, he mentioned his dream of founding an international students' hostel.

His engineering job during the previous nine years had taken him to many parts of the Continent, and he had learned to speak French, German, Italian, Spanish and even a little Russian.

Social Outcasts

Back in London he had made a point of mixing with foreign students so that he could keep up his languages. He had found that many of them, although they came from good homes in their own countries, were forced to live as social outcasts in London. This was especially true of coloured students from the British colonies.

"Here, in the mother country of the Empire," he said to an acquaintance the other day, "these students should have had a friendly welcome. But all they got was a slap in the face.

"They were meeting the wrong people and getting bad ideas. They were the future leaders of their own countries, and they were going home

anti-British just because there was no proper place for them to live here while they were studying."

The suggestion made at the birthday party was enthusiastically received by everyone present and Driscoll announced he would quit his job and start a hostel in a house which was for sale at East Croydon.

His decision was greeted with cheers, everyone promised him support, and a toast to the hostel's success was drunk in yet another glass of sherry.

The Morning After

Next morning, when the *bonhomie* engendered by the wine was dissipated, Driscoll found that no one was prepared to help him when it came to hard cash. "The mere mention of money," he said, "made them cool off. I knew then I would have to do everything on my own."

He bought 20 Addiscombe Grove and named it the International Language Club—not in honour of Esperanto, but of tolerance, which he considers the only true international language.

Very soon he was caring for twelve students of five different nationalities. At last he was in business as an ambassador of international goodwill.

News of the hostel spread rapidly through the student grapevine. By the end of the year, Terry—as club residents quickly learned to call him—had acquired several neighbouring houses and was accommodating 100 students.

Nineteen thirty-nine was another year of progress and the club grew bigger, but there were still hundreds of students who wanted to join and could not be squeezed in. Then came the war and Terry was called up as an engineering instructor with the Navy.

Fortunately, throughout the war he was stationed near London and, in his spare time, he kept the club going despite fresh difficulties that wartime restrictions placed in his way.

The blitz proved a blessing in disguise. The club lost one of its houses ("There were nine different nationalities buried in the rubble," Terry recalls), but endeared itself to the local populace by providing shelter for many bombed-out Croydon citizens.

"The example of those blitz victims," said Terry, "was the finest that the foreign students could have had, so I decided that the club would take two-thirds students and one-third non-students. I am also keeping it one-third English, two-thirds overseas, and fifty-fifty white and coloured. That way we achieve a balanced community."

After the war, Driscoll set about buying many more houses in the vicinity of Addiscombe Grove. His activities aroused the opposition of certain property interests who thought he was undermining the value of one of Croydon's best residential districts, and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning called for an inquiry.

Had Powerful Friends

By this time, Driscoll was well known to foreign embassies and government departments. He had some powerful friends, and at the inquiry he had the support, either openly or behind the scenes, of several Ambassadors, most of the Dominions' High Commissioners, the Colonial Office, and a host of church and welfare organizations.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones, said: "Mr. Driscoll has shown how idealism can be made practical. . . . A great happiness has been brought into the lives of people who otherwise would have been lonely and possibly embittered by their experience."

To Terry's delight, the inquiry decided that "the public social value of this organization must prevail," and zoned an area of nine and a half acres for the club's development.

"This fateful decision," Terry told a friend, "has changed me from a man with a dream to a man with a clearly defined purpose in life. That purpose is to settle once and for all the problem of foreign students in England."

"I wonder if you'd repeat that message again. I'm afraid I'm a bit muddled"

He has gone ahead buying more houses, taking more students, and preparing plans for the day he is allowed to start building. Terry works a sixteen-hour, seven-day week. He knows and greets by name every one of the 500 people from fifty-three different countries at present living at the club, and remembers most of the 8,000 who have lived there since 1938.

He is convinced the club has an important rôle to play in the achievement of world peace. "The earth could be a paradise," he says, "but if we go on with our silly rivalries, the atomic age will master us.

"Every person, young or old, who wants a paradise on earth must work for it, and he must start at once promoting understanding first of all in his house, then in his town and country, and finally throughout the world."

He believes that students who have passed through the hostel and gone back to their many different countries make up a powerful force for peace. One of his proudest moments was when he heard a club resident, Percy Jones from West Africa, preach his first sermon after he had been consecrated as Assistant Bishop of Sierra Leone. Jones chose as his subject, "Christianity transcends nationalism."

"Miniature World"

"That is what we believe here," says Driscoll, and recalls the tribute paid to the club by the Bishop of Croydon, the Rt. Rev. C. K. N. Bardsley: "This is a world in miniature. Here the attempt is being made successfully to break down suspicion and learn from one another. We should be proud that such an experiment in mutual understanding is being carried out in our town."

The *Croydon Advertiser* has noted "a kindly sympathy among townsfolk towards these students in their period of training in this country, and a very marked appreciation of their splendid behaviour." In eleven years, not one club resident has been in trouble with the police.

At Croydon's Manufacturing and Industrial Exhibition this year there was a stand among the exporters of radios, kitchenware and typewriters, which proclaimed: "The International Language Club exports goodwill."

Evidence of this invaluable, though invisible, export can be found in the tribute of Mohammed Asad, twenty-two year old son of the acting Governor of Eastern Pakistan and a student at the London School of Economics.

Education In Itself

"Living in this club," he wrote not long ago, "has been an education for me and an experience which no academic degree affixed to my name could do justice to. Here has been achieved a task of social engineering which binds men from all over the world in a bond which strikes the note of friendliness, peace and goodwill, and which one day may raise the world to the level of its aspirations."

When he goes home Asad will enter politics. "I think my international friendships will influence my politics quite a lot," he says.

Although the club is international, it is also extremely "British." When Princess Elizabeth was married, the students subscribed £65 for a silver salver which was taken to Buckingham Palace by a delegation of thirteen students representing Australia, the Bahamas, China, Egypt, England, France, India, Indo-China, Jamaica, Malaya, Norway, Pakistan and West Africa.

Later the King invited Driscoll and two of the students to afternoon tea, and Driscoll went with a girl medical student from Nigeria and a Brahmin geological student from India.

Almost every day Terry is called on to perform some minor miracle in the way of finding accommodation for students (who pay £3 a week for a single room and full board), although even he was nonplussed when the Colonial Office asked him to find rooms for 750 Maltese.

Slept In A Marquee

On one occasion a batch of 120 students from India and Pakistan arrived at short notice and there was nothing to do but put them in a marquee on the back lawn.

An Indian official who visited the club late that night looked into the marquee in wonderment. "Amazing," he said to Driscoll. "At home they wouldn't even live in the same town, and here you've got them sleeping in the same tent."

"That was nothing extraordinary," Terry told a recent visitor to the club. "Come upstairs and look into the billiard room."

They did so, and saw five youths happily playing snooker. "One from Tanganyika, one from India, one from Pakistan, one from Uganda, and one from Switzerland," said Terry. The youths smiled, said "Hallo, Chief," and went on with their game.

Terry looked at them again, then turned to his companion. "Two Christians, one Jew, one Hindu and one Moslem," he said, "and yet they say the world can't live at peace. Here we know that peace is possible."

International Language Club footballers: their "home grounds" are (from left): Wales, Nigeria, Barbados, England, Nigeria, England, and Sierra Leone

The League president thinks over a problem. Good players are more easily spotted when the ball is out of play

SOCCER'S DICTATOR

by STANLEY RUSSELL

With the top jobs all in his hands, modest Arthur Drewry is the most powerful man in football. He argues with the Government, acts as judge, jury—and banker

A YOUNGSTER WHO WAS not a very good footballer used to annoy his office superiors by taking time off to play soccer. His name was Arthur Drewry.

Today Drewry is still borrowing time from business—with impunity now, since in the intervening years he has taken the precaution of becoming his own boss. He has also become the most powerful man in football.

His recent election as president of the Football League, biggest tournament of its kind in the world, made him something very close to England's soccer dictator. For he is also chairman of the F.A. international selection committee, where he has the last word (and often the first as well) in the choice of England's international teams, a vice-president of the F.A., and vice-president of F.I.F.A. (Federation Internationale de Football Association), governing body of the sport.

He is also a director of Grimsby Town F.C., a J.P., a Grimsby councillor, president of Lincolnshire F.A. and Lincolnshire school sports, and chairman or vice-chairman of many public bodies in his home county.

If ever there has been a reluctant dictator it is Drewry. In football circles it is an open secret that when his name was suggested for the League presidency he would not stand until satisfied that another man whom he considered more worthy had refused.

He "Tries" Players

The job as president keeps Drewry busy. One day he is likely to be arguing football's case with a Cabinet Minister and the next sitting in judgment on a player who has been reported for an offence on the field. He may go from helping to decide whether a minor soccer organization shall be granted a small loan to investigating the affairs of a big League club.

And always he is faced with a lonely homeward journey of 100 miles or so —usually more, for Grimsby is an outpost where, so far as soccer administration is concerned, nothing ever happens.

"I try to look in at my office every morning," he says, half jokingly. Football work demands much of his attention from Monday to Friday, and on Saturday he travels to watch potential England players. Once a week he tries to attend the Grimsby Town board meeting.

His career as a soccer administrator began when, twenty-five years ago, he joined the board of Grimsby Town, of which club his father-in-law, the late J. W. Stookes, was chairman. Drewry was tall and slender then, and still is, with iron-grey hair and moustache, a ruddy face and twinkling eye.

He quickly found that a football director's life was hard work, certainly at weekends. As the junior member of the Grimsby board he had the duty of accompanying the reserve team to their away matches.

Arthur Drewry has travelled far since then. And though the critics may find fault with the England teams he helps to choose, he is now spared the embarrassment of being chased by an angry crowd.

This did happen once, at Wrexham. By that time he had been promoted to accompany the Grimsby first team, whose goalkeeper, named Jock Archibald, had annoyed the home crowd.

To avoid possible trouble, Archibald was smuggled away separately while the rest of the Grimsby party began the long walk to the station, with several Wrexham supporters in attendance. These decided that Joe Cooper, a Grimsby forward, was the man they were looking for, and approached uncomfortably close, muttering threats about a river.

They ignored the eloquence of director Drewry, but eventually Cooper turned on them and, extending both hands, cried: "Look at my hands. You should know that the man you are looking for has lost one of his fingers. See, mine are all there."

Trip That Started It

A more pleasant trip, to Glasgow, was the indirect cause of his stepping into the higher realms of football management. A famous Grimsby player, Jackie Bestall, had been chosen to represent the Football League against the Scottish League and Arthur Drewry went with him.

Drewry made many new friends on the visit; and when some of them asked him to stand for election to the League Management Committee he accepted the invitation. Nobody was surprised, except perhaps Drewry himself, when he was elected.

Election to the League Management Committee automatically brought a seat on the Football Association council, which controls not only eighty-four League clubs (the other four are Welsh) but hundreds of minor amateur and professional clubs as well. And now he was really to find out what work for football meant.

Soon he was seen at matches far from home and of no direct interest to Grimsby. He became chairman of the international selection committee.

From now on, at every match, he was watching one man, or more, rather than the game itself. Unlike other spectators, he cannot relax for a moment when the ball goes out of play. He must study how the players position themselves in that moment, for unobtrusive positional play is a much more telling advertisement of a footballer's skill than all the running about in the world.

Wife Smuggled In

Until comparatively recently, there was an unwritten rule that players chosen for England should lead a hermit-like existence for three or four days before a match in the team's secret hide-out.

For one match the hiding place was a big hotel in the heart of London. One of the players smuggled in his wife.

On the morning of the match he was called away and took their key with him. His wife, wanting to get in, approached a man she had seen at previous F.A. functions and asked if he would mind asking the player for "the key of our room."

When the player returned, he was met by Drewry, who casually announced: "Your wife is asking for the key to her room." The subtle difference in the wording was not lost upon the player, who later told me the whole story. The Drewry memory is still diplomatically befogged.

I marry—and ask for a B.B.C. audition

MY LIFE (4)

Mabel and I get married and settle down. . . . One night Mabel says: "Why not have a shot at the B.B.C.?" I write off, am asked to the studio, feel very forlorn at the mike

by WILFRED PICKLES

LESS THAN A YEAR after our engagement, Mabel and I decided to get married. I knew she was the one girl for me and, as the wedding day approached, it was plain that the ceremony was to be no meagre affair.

Anything could happen with one hundred and fifty guests in frivolous mood, so we took precautions. We arranged that after the wedding we would take a taxi five miles along the road to where our own car would be waiting. Alas, when we reached the spot it was to find that some bright spirit had filled the car with confetti.

That evening we went to see Shaun Glenville in a revue at the Liverpool Empire and stayed at the Adelphi Hotel, where a staff porter was lucky enough to get a half-sovereign tip from me in mistake for a shilling.

London Was A Thrill

My embarrassment at the lingering confetti had something to do with my error, which was not discovered until I was turning out my pockets at the Lygon Arms Hotel, Broadway, Worcestershire. We spent only twenty-four hours in this luscious village, which must surely be one of the most beautiful in England, before we drove to London.

It was a big thrill for both of us to see the life of the capital, though we tried, perhaps not very successfully, to appear quite used to it all. We went to the Phoenix Theatre to see Noel Coward in *Private Lives* and during the interval followed the crowd into the bar.

There, the "Oxford" accent held sway; most of the customers were in evening dress and every sentence I heard ended with "darling" or "my dear" or "sir." I asked Mabel what she would like to drink and she replied, "Sherry, please."

Trying to conceal my inexperience and fighting hard against that shrinking feeling which most people get when they are introduced to this sort of life, I wriggled my way to the front.

I was used to beer, but as I got to the bar I was saying to myself: "A sherry and a port."

From my right I heard: "Four brandies, please." and from my left: "Two brandies."

All around me I saw starched cuffs and bejewelled wrists raised in the act of drinking brandy.

"Yes, sir?" said the bartender.

"Two brandies," I said. "Two brandies, please." We laughed all the way back to our seats.

Back in Southport, we slipped for a few months into the suburban grooves: regular working hours, a spick-and-span and tidy home, over-the-garden-wall discussions with our neighbours, evening walks round the neat rows of houses on balmy summer evenings.

I was still working with my father laying bricks—and hating it more than ever. There was an undercurrent of revolt in my mind. I had made no serious effort to move into the professional theatre, but the longing was still there. One day, I felt sure, I would have to strike out and break new ground, meet new people and be absolutely independent of the family.

Mabel, too, was gripped by a love of acting, and we both joined an amateur dramatic society in Liverpool, but found our fellow amateurs a rather pretentious lot, who were constantly bickering. The society had no headquarters and to talk over ideas for further productions meant meeting in members' homes; these coteries developed into something akin to mothers' sewing classes, with peevish gossip crowding out dramatics.

Our First Setback

We were more and more irritated by these meaningless meetings and, as we had a child on the way, Mabel and I gave up our membership. We were delighted at the prospect of becoming parents.

From our personal point of view, fate had been kindly, and our only worries were those of anybody who wants to change his environment and job. Then, one night, we had our first setback.

Mabel collapsed in the bedroom. I sent for the doctor, knowing that something had gone wrong concerning the child. But the doctor was not sure.

In fact, he had not the remotest idea what the trouble was, and even went so far as to suggest that we should take Mabel to the infirmary. "It may be appendicitis," he said.

We said: "We would like to see a specialist."

And the next day I drove Mabel to Liverpool, where we were told that something had gone wrong with the child and that Mabel would have to be operated on the same night. I stayed on at the hospital, waiting to hear how the operation had gone, and it was a tremendous relief when a nurse came down the corridor to tell me that all seemed well.

It was only then I learned that Mabel might easily have bled to death. We had lost the child, but Mabel was safe and doing well.

Our Baby Son, David

On August 20 of the following year, however, we had the greatest thrill of our lives when our son, David, was born. This led to an even greater devotion to home life, and every evening we would draw up to the fireside and hold a play-reading session.

I still delighted in reading aloud, although I was so convinced that the family would think me a terrible bore that I would hide the books away whenever any of them came round to see us unexpectedly.

It was in this spell of happy domesticity that we became keen radio listeners; every play that was produced we "booked" for by ringing in ink its announcement in the *Radio Times*.

David was developing well and was already showing unmistakable signs that he had some of my temperament. He would joyfully recite nursery rhymes to us before he went to bed, and by the time he was four he was reciting them at children's parties in the district.

One night after we had put David to bed, we were reading *Man and Superman* when I suddenly remembered there was a play on the air. I switched on.

The production was slow and not particularly well acted. Mabel got exasperated and said: "Oh let's have it off and get back to *Man and Superman*."

As I retrieved the book and silenced the set, Mabel said, "I've been thinking . . . why don't you have that shot at the B.B.C. as I've kept telling you? If they'll stand for that, they'll stand for you!"

Mabel's remark caught my imagination, I sat down and framed a carefully worded letter to the B.B.C. in Manchester, asking if they would "kindly grant me an audition." I listed the parts I had played and named the amateur societies I had been associated with.

I walked down to the post office about midnight to make sure there was no undue loss of time. When I got back home, I was already speculating about a reply. "We should get one within a week, surely?" I said.

"Best thing is to forget about it for the time being," Mabel said, covering up her own anxiety.

Got Back A Form

The reply arrived within a day or two—but it was only an official form on which I was asked to give personal details opposite a series of questions. I got that off the same day and in the evening we worked out a plan for the readings I would give when the B.B.C. offered me a test.

Something from Shakespeare would be expected and I decided on a soliloquy from *Hamlet*. This was to be followed by a speech from St. John Ervine's *The Ship*, a few passages from Sean O'Casey's plays, some poetry and a bit of north-country dialect in verse.

Each evening I rehearsed my set pieces, with Mabel as critic. For actuality, we put out the lights, except a reading lamp, and Mabel judged my performance only on what she heard.

Then, one morning as we were having breakfast, we heard the clatter of the letter-box. Both of us dashed out to see a postcard on the mat.

On it was the invitation we had been waiting for: "Broadcasting House, Manchester—4.0 p.m. Tuesday."

It left enough time to put the final polish to my readings, but those days seemed like a month. We left David in the care of Mabel's mother and set off in our Austin Seven in hope and fear, and suffering all the agonizing tortures of a first night.

A Sergeant-major Type

Already I was feeling that broadcasting was the one thing I really wanted to do, and with Mabel also so set on the idea, I sensed the importance of the occasion for both of us.

Arriving at the unprepossessing North Regional headquarters in Piccadilly, Manchester, I left Mabel in the car, and entered. At least, I almost did, for a big commissionaire, one of the ex-sergeant-major types the corporation seems to collect, halted me with, "What's your business?"

To me, the B.B.C. seemed shrouded in mystery and I was so impressed by its power over so many people that I already

FROM THE PICKLES ALBUM . . .

Family group at the wedding of Wilfred and Mabel. "That evening I gave a hotel porter a half-sovereign in mistake for a shilling"

Wilfred and Mabel today in their Devonshire Street, London, flat. On their honeymoon, London scared them a bit

felt desperately insignificant; my reception left me feeling smaller still. The bullying commissionaire ushered me unceremoniously into a thickly matted waiting-room where several others sat around, sharing a glum silence.

Excitement was probably responsible for the unsociable atmosphere, but wasn't it also an unspoken terror of some secreted microphone which would blazen the least sound, the quietest, most personal remark, throughout this building—and possibly to listening millions?

It was like a dentist's waiting-room, and it came as a great relief when I was called out by a charming young woman with a pleasant and well-modulated voice. She led me to studio 3 and placed me about two feet from a suspended microphone, manoeuvring me into position by gentle pressure on my arm.

"Right, you can begin now," she said.

I took in the room at a glance—the bareness, the thick fitted carpet in fawn, and the clock on the wall above the door with a prominent seconds finger moving in silence.

The walls even looked soundproof and for a moment I had a fleeting vision of a padded cell. I felt just as lonely and isolated as if I had been in one.

Nobody appeared to be ready to listen. I had no clue as to how much I was expected to read. It was like some surrealist joke.

I started with *Hamlet*, moved into the speech from *The Ship* and then into a curtain speech from the Lancashire play, *Hindle Wakes*. Then the attractive young woman re-appeared, told me to hold on, went away and then put her head round the door and asked: "Can you do anything else?"

Triumphantly I leapt into my Sean O'Casey.

Back came the attentive young woman. Could I do any other dialects?

This was snag number one: I had no script to meet such a request and had practised no other dialects. So I lapsed into a bit of Gloucestershire, simply making it up as I went along.

I Left Unenlightened

Most politely, the young woman thanked me and showed me out into the corridor. Anxiously, I turned to her and said: "Shall I hear something from you?"

"Oh yes, of course," she answered.

"Either way?" I asked.

"Yes, either way." She smiled, held out an arm in the direction of the exit and made off towards the dentist's waiting-room.

I had been inside about twenty minutes and as I rushed outside to tell Mabel the news, she called from the car: "How've you gone on?"

"I haven't the remotest idea," I told her. "I've only seen a girl."

Not very sure of what was happening to us, we threaded a way through Manchester's traffic and drove back to Southport. "We'll just have to wait and see," I said, with as reassuring an air as I could summon.

We literally waited on the doorstep for the postman. On the tenth day we were rewarded, for there arrived a postcard signed by Jan Bussel, head of the North Regional drama department, to say my audition had been successful and that my name was now included on the department's list of players.

Within a month there was a further communication from Bussel, offering me the part of Sir Frederick in a play entitled, *The Mystery in the Cutting*.

I danced a jig, waving the letter as I did so. "Let me see it," said Mabel, grabbing my arm.

"Sir Frederick!" she exclaimed. "Sir Frederick! It sounds like a big part."

A big part! I was almost convinced it was. When the script reached us, we scanned it quickly for "Sir Frederick's" lines. He had four.

Nevertheless, I was intensely excited as I went for the first rehearsal; there were two evening try-outs from seven until ten o'clock and a final rehearsal from seven o'clock until transmission time at nine thirty on the night of the broadcast.

I was even more thrilled when I saw that great north-country actor, Frank Nichols, was playing the lead.

He was a small man with greying hair and whimsical eyes set in a rather bird-like face and I recognized his kind nature immediately, for, seeing I was a newcomer, he came over to me and shook my hand and said quietly and sincerely, "I hope you do well."

I admired the willing and understanding way he took production from Jan Bussel, who was also a charming individual, tall, aesthetic and diligent. He had a pleasing, south-country accent and had a tolerant, persuasive way with the cast. Not once did he register any impatience, let alone attempt to bully us.

When Bussel suggested anything to Nichols, I marvelled at the response. Nichols always said: "Thank you."

I didn't know the B.B.C. Presently I came to learn that it pays to say "Thank you" in the corporation.

Mabel's Verdict

I was delighted with the broadcast. It seemed to us to have gone over smoothly and when it was all over and the tension was severed, we talked about each other's performances and tried to recall the play from the critic's standpoint.

The criticism I valued most was Mabel's, and as I also wanted to tell her about all the wonderful little things that had happened to me at Broadcasting House, I slipped out after shaking hands all round, leapt into my car, and raced back to Southport.

Mabel, all agog, had sat close to the wireless set at home, and in her determination not to miss my four lines, she had kept constant watch on the tuning dial to maintain maximum quality of reception.

"It was wonderful," she said. The fact that she had heard my voice at all was enough to fire her enthusiasm.

Her father came round and told me: "You sounded just like a titled gentleman." As I had played Sir Frederick, that was praise indeed!

It was only four lines, but it was a start. And I had earned money from broadcasting for the first time. They gave me a cheque for three guineas.

In the months that followed, more work than I had dreamed possible came from the B.B.C. and my diary was soon showing fairly consistent engagements on features and Children's Hour programmes. Mabel and I talked about broadcasting as a full-time job and we got as far as planning a move to Manchester.

It would mean launching out on our own and taking a chance. But it might help to be on the B.B.C. doorstep.

I Get The Lead

Two of the most talented producers the B.B.C. has ever had were working hard at this time in Manchester. Geoffrey Bridson was finding some first-class feature material, while Cecil McGivern, although he had been at Broadcasting House only a short time, was showing what amounted to a genius in drama productions.

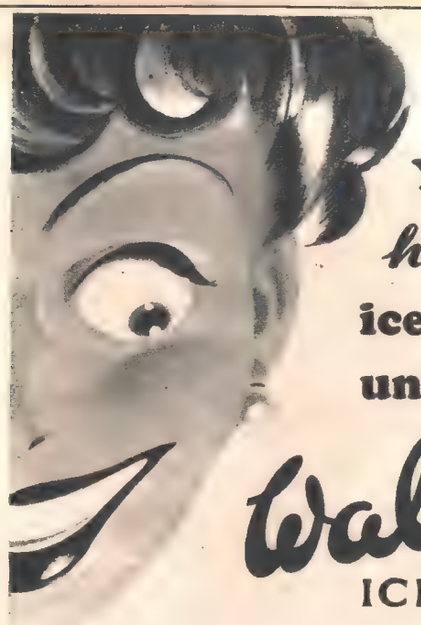
McGivern, slim and alert, was clearly destined for big things and I had never met a man who was more straightforward. His approach was like that of an arrow, direct and sharp.

Olive Shapley, who was in charge of Children's Hour, took a benevolent interest in my progress. Then came a leading part!

Bussel was transferred to the London drama department and was succeeded by that unruffled man who invariably appears quite contented with life—Edward Wilkinson.

He had come over from Northern Ireland. In his first production—by a coincidence it was *The Wilkinsons*—he gave me the main character, that of the steel magnate, John Wilkinson, whom I had to play from the age of eighteen to seventy-odd.

It was the first play for which he had



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MY LIFE by WILFRED PICKLES

Continued from previous page

been available that the fatherly, masterful Frank Nichols had not taken the lead. His health was faltering a little and I guessed he had felt for some weeks that the time was not far off when some other actor would inherit his place..

It must have grieved him to have to play a subsidiary part, yet there was not a trace of self-pity; indeed, he was so gracious that he came over to me during the final rehearsal to encourage me with these words: "You're playing remarkably well. I think you'll go a long way—and I hope you do!"

For me, this was the one saddening feature of the occasion. My respect for Nichols, already considerable, was now boundless, and I insisted to myself that I should remember the lesson that whoever you are, or whatever job you are doing, there is always somebody round the corner ready to step into your place.

We Moved To Manchester

I was far from convinced that I had been marked out as a steady lead, but as I drove home, I thought the time had now come when Mabel and I should move with David to Manchester. There was a risk. B.B.C. work might not continue to roll in.

If I had any doubts about moving when I reached home they were dispelled within five minutes by Mabel, who had heard the broadcast and had been thinking, as I had, about packing our bags for that begrimed but highly cultured axis of Lancashire. Her mind, like mine, was made up. We were to have a go.

Suburban Windsor Avenue, Gatley, was another hemisphere altogether for David. Nearly five now, he was ready to start school. I marvelled at his spontaneous comments on my Children's Hour broadcasts: one night, as I read him his bedtime story he said, "Don't you think you should say that a bit quieter, Daddy. It would make it more exciting."

Mabel, too, was constantly offering suggestions about my broadcasting, and she listened attentively to each of my performances. At the wheel of the car, as the three of us made for Gatley and our own bright new world, I thought: We're lucky, really. We're all interested in the same things—a perfect team!

I wondered what Manchester held for us in the near future. I had already made a point of letting the B.B.C. know our new address. The B.B.C. had not overlooked the information, for there, lying on the bare boards of our new home to gladden our eyes as we opened the front door, were two contracts—one for Children's Hour and another for a feature programme.

"Well, that's a good start, anyway," Mabel sighed, as she made for the kitchen to prepare some tea. I got down to the job of setting out the furniture and laying the carpets, and, long after David had been put to bed, we were still at it, making the house snug, cleaning and tidying-up.

Our family life was rich and happy and delightful, just as it had been in our former home in Southport. Only the scene changed in this new chapter, which was bringing me into still closer contact with the B.B.C.

The B.B.C. was now so much a part of my life that I had to keep a separate diary for my broadcasting engagements, many of them in Children's Hour, where Olive Shapley was ably getting through a tremendous amount of work as organizer.

A Guinea A Time

Although the fees for these broadcasts were only a guinea, or at the most thirty shillings, I found them well worth doing from a financial point of view when I was contracted for three or four a week. It was during one of these heavy spells of Children's Hour work that I met those radio favourites of the youngsters—Muriel Levy, Doris Gambell and Violet Carson.

Variety was the one field of broadcasting I had not tried and, as I regarded heads of departments with considerable respect, I made no move to approach David Porter on the subject. However, word got round one afternoon that he was on the look-out for somebody to take a part in one of his shows which entailed a little singing.

Violet Carson, who was herself respected in the studios, went up to him and said: "You keep sending to London for folks to play these parts for you while all the time there's somebody on your own doorstep who can do the job equally well."

"Who's that?" said Porter. Violet escorted me over to him. I got the job.

The first variety show in which I appeared was an oddity called *Boy Babies Don't Matter*. I believe the phrase had been used by a Member of Parliament or a newspaper in relation to some official statistics about births in Britain.

The show set out to indicate how important boys were—to girls! It was good light revue with a lively script and pleasant music. I enjoyed every moment of it.

Put Up My Price

A few weeks later, Porter telephoned to ask me to take a part in another of his productions. I whipped up my courage and took a chance. "How much will I be paid?" I asked.

Porter was obviously surprised. "Can't be any more than three guineas," he protested.

I took a deep breath and said I could not play for less than four guineas. In fact, I would gladly have accepted the part for two! There was a long, awkward pause. Then Porter agreed.

He told me proudly that he had Hugh Morton and Marjorie Westbury fixed up to play in the same revue. The event

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It's unwise to commit yourself to buying a house immediately after a first viewing. Before making a decision, call in an independent surveyor to give the house a professional check over.

WRITE TO JOHN BULL ABOUT IT: Readers with personal problems can enlist the help of John Bull's team of experts. Inquiries (other than medical) should be sent to the John Bull Free Advice Service, 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Please enclose a stamped and addressed envelope for reply.

"They may be sisters, but I'm darned if I can see the resemblance"

became for me the high-water mark of my radio career up to that time and I was so conscious of its significance that when it occurred to me that I had not a decent suit to wear, I called at a multiple tailor's store and bought a fine new one.

Feeling so debonair gave me extra confidence and I was able to devote myself entirely to my three parts without being troubled by inhibitions about what the star performers might be thinking about my appearance.

I felt well-dressed enough to face even Mr. Liveing, whom I had never set eyes on but longed to see just to satisfy my curiosity about the regional director who was talked about only in undertones.

I had heard, too, of Mr. Fitch and Mr. Mills, who with Mr. Liveing, were officed on the third floor of Broadcasting House—a hierarchy whose physical anonymity left one wondering if there was not after all something behind the outward work of the B.B.C. which was not known, either to broadcasters or listeners.

Stories of producers having been called before these men brought to mind the picture of unwilling birds being hoisted up to the royal eagle's eyrie.

It wasn't the first time I had been struck by the weirdness of the workings of the corporation, but to me it was most baffling and somewhat discouraging to learn how remote executives were from the working broadcasters. It was not really surprising, therefore, that I should not have seen these heads.

As I came to know the corporation better, I was more and more convinced that if broadcasting stopped for a week, the executives would not notice it and would probably think things were going a little smoother.

I like one of the B.B.C. stories about an executive who was leaving Broadcasting House when he was hailed by a friend who asked: "How are things with you, old man?"

The executive stifled a yawn. "Tired out, old boy. Fact of the matter is, there's too much darned broadcasting goes on here!"

In Broadcasting House, Manchester, at this time, I often saw a tall, handsome, severe young man whose whole bearing bespoke sincerity. Always cool and unperturbed, he had a gentle voice and deep, dark brown, searching eyes: one regarded him as one would a popular schoolmaster. Everyone in the studios liked him: there was a serenity and democracy in his presence such as is found in so very few men.

When I was introduced to John Salt, the Region's programme director, I was so impressed by the man that I gave Mabel a thorough verbal picture of him when I got home. I didn't know then how much I was to owe to him.

It Was Hard On Mabel

I was putting in long hours and often started with an early morning short story reading, followed by rehearsals during the rest of the day and a transmission at night.

My indifferent hours, with all the domestic inconveniences they entailed, coupled with the fact that Mabel had to take David nearly a mile to school and then back home twice each day, led to Mabel losing weight. She was worried, too, by David's hearty dislike of school—even fiercer than my own had been.

David, I felt, needed the kindliness and sympathetic approach of the nuns at a convent I had discovered in another part of Manchester; and I was determined, too, that this long daily trek for Mabel had to stop. So we made another move, and rented a house in Whalley Range, Manchester.

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Miss Lorton's business

She imagined the animal crouching while the men lit the fuse. She had to stop them. She had to stop them at once

by DUDLEY HOYS

ILLUSTRATED BY TONY WEARE

Her arm was raised, her expression threatening. Codger said sharply: "Look, missus, tha'd best clear off"

IF YOU EVER COME up our way and see a crimson-faced woman flowing slowly along the village street, a woman with the figure of a walrus and spectacles that have thick, curving lenses, that will be Miss Lorton.

Notice her blue eyes, alert, very kindly, and capable of fierce flashings. She may be carrying a big basket crammed full of fish intended for her twenty-six cats. They came to her from various parts of the dale, finding it more comfortable to sponge on her than earn their keep at the various farms by catching rats and mice.

Miss Lorton is perfectly sane. She merely has an embarrassing sentiment for animals and a fanatical hatred of anything that involves their distress. Once she caught a farmer hitting his horse and she seized him by the hair, and pulled, and there was nearly a court case.

Originally from the south, she settled among the fells thirty years ago. So the village is used to her, and her various activities have given people good-natured amusement. But her last episode of the badger dig on Mart Fell has made everybody treat her with a new respect.

"Old girl's got summat oop here," they say admiringly, and tap their foreheads.

The truth about her encounter with Codger and Tom Dent and George Hirson trickled out in little bits. On the Monday these three had been out with the Hunt, scrambling up stony pitches, plodding across soggy mosses, and getting a full ration of the strenuous effort demanded by a line of country where horses would soon break their necks.

ON their way back, the three took a short cut, descending the steep, broken granite of Mart Crag. At the base of it, about 400 feet above the dale road and at a spot where the dead brackens still tangled in yellow spikiness between the boulders, Tom spied something unusual. He got on his hands and knees, parted a matting of old heather, and let out an excited sound.

The other two stared. They were looking at a badger hole. It was a tiny, natural aperture in the solid rock, and seemed to go a long way back.

"Spades'll never dig yon out," said Codger, with a touch of professional authority. He was a shot firer at Rackington Colliery, away on the coast, and although he lived twenty miles from the dale he often took off illicit days to get around the fells with his two farmer friends.

His idea was this. They should come back here on Saturday afternoon. He couldn't very well take another day off before that. He would bring with him a couple of blasting charges and a length of fuse. George could bring his Lakeland terrier and send it inside. If the dog failed to shift the badger they would use the explosive and break their way through.

Tom happened to mention the arrangement to his girl, Eileen Tyson, and she happened to mention it to Jessie Hall, and in the end it got to the ears of Miss Lorton. Not that the three men knew anything about that. They duly met on the Saturday, which chose to be cloudless and remarkably hot for early April, and trudged up through the two stone-walled intake fields rising to the open fell.

They were mopping their faces by the time they reached the badger hole.

George held on to the excited terrier while Codger, flat on his chest, explored the interior of the hole by flashing about with a pocket torch.

"Seems to go back a long way," he said. "Ay. And it sort of curves. I can't see the end."

He scrambled to his feet and added: "Try terrier."

The dog shot in eagerly and they kept quite still, listening.

"There's summat going on," said Tom.

He was right. They heard a series of muffled sounds, and then the dog came out faster than it had gone in, with a nasty bite in its near shoulder. It stood well away from the hole, and yelped, and licked at the wound.

Codger shrugged, dived a hand into his pocket and drew out two cartridges and a length of dark, worm-like fuse.

"That the stuff that goes bang?" asked George.

"Ay." Codger began to prepare his charge, and the others watched him with interest. He explained that he was going to bind the two cartridges together, fit the fuse into the open end of one of them, and wedge the charge in the mouth of the hole with a heavy boulder. The explosion should be powerful enough to smash the crown of rock above the hole. Once that first narrow section was cleared the cave opened out beyond and they could get through with a squeeze.

Tom seemed dubious. "You're not goin' to blow us oop?"

Codger laughed. "Nay." The fuse, he pointed out, would take ten seconds to burn its length, giving them ample time to take cover behind a neighbouring giant boulder.

So there were the three, unimaginative but not consciously cruel, taken up with the interest of what this wicked little pinch of explosive was going to do, and even the dog, which had scampered off to drink thirstily at the beck, had

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by David Hand

MISS LORTON'S BUSINESS

Continued from previous page

returned to stand watching in an intelligent way, head cocked to one side and stump of a tail flagging.

The dog heard Miss Lorton first. She was plugging ponderously up the slope, perspiration rolling off her. George glanced round and swore, and Codger said: "Take no notice. She can't do owt."

He went on with his job. Miss Lorton drew level with them. After panting for long moments she got out one enraged word:

"Beasts!" She fought for breath. "How dare you blow up its home and destroy the poor thing? What harm has it done to you?" The effort of talking and trying to recover her breath at the same time made her appear to increase her swelling fatness.

Tom, a trifle annoyed, said: "Leave us alone, missus, we're busy."

She turned on him. "I'm not a Mrs., and don't imagine your impertinence will dissuade me from putting down cruelty." Her eyes behind the thick lenses shone fiercely. "Beasts! Go home. Leave the creature alone."

The unruffled Codger, busy with cartridges and fuse, said: "Mind your own business."

"It is my business! It's the business of all decent-minded people to interfere when brutes like you attempt to take the lives of harmless animals."

"Harmless?" George wrinkled his nose. "Badgers hev been known to take young chicks. Ay."

"Don't you try to tell me what badgers do and don't do!" she blared. "I've studied the ways of wild life for forty-five years. They're the most harmless of the four-legged creatures. The damage they do is so little and the good they do so much——" Her arm was raised, and her expression so threatening, Codger spoke sharply.

"Now, look here, Missus, tha'd best clear off. And don't try violence, or I might forget you're a woman. I don't poke my nose into other people's affairs, and won't stand other people poking their noses into mine. If we choose to have a bit of sport——"

"Sport!" she cried, almost choking with contempt.

"Ay, sport." He turned his back on her, put the prepared charge on the ground and looked about for a suitable chunk of rock with which to wedge it into the mouth of the hole.

This was the crisis. Miss Lorton could visualize the badger crouching there in the darkness, helpless and doomed. She would have been quite willing to launch herself at all three men. But she realized clearly enough that they could deal easily with her impotent attack. They would hold her off, and from the legal aspect she would be the offender.

Tears welled up into her eyes, tears of anguished protest. Her right hand swung up dramatically and pointed at the high and shining fells above.

"Look!" she screamed.

The trio were startled into staring at the jagged skyline of the ridge.

"Look!" she screamed again.

THEY saw nothing unusual, only the glittering rock and the perched boulders, the winding ravines with their sparkle of water, the pale gold swathes of the brackens and the sunlit, vivid lushness of the spring mosses.

"Think!" she cried. "Think of this lovely world and the clean, warm air and the smiling, kindly sky! How would you like to be snatched away from it, your life snuffed out like a candle?"

"Tha's daft," said Codger tolerantly, and the next instant let out a warning yell. There was a fizzing noise and a slightly acrid stench. The short length of fuse was smouldering steadily.

All they could do was to bolt for the sanctuary of the enormous boulder. Miss Lorton's waddle to safety lacked speed. There was a loud bang, and a splinter of rock chipped the fattest part of her.

That took the stiffening out of Codger's confidence. There might be trouble over this. The three men sighed their relief when she offered to take no action over her minor wound, provided they swore to leave the badger alone. In any case, they could do nothing without explosive.

They went back home, debating in bewilderment how that fuse could have set itself alight. Days later, Tom remembered that she had not been wearing her spectacles while distracting their attention with shouting and pointing at the fell top. She had been holding them in her hand. With the sun beating down fiercely, she must have used one of those thick lenses as a burning-glass.

"T'old devil," he told himself, grinning widely. "She's nay so daft."

HANGOVER HOUSE

Continued from page 11

dark corner with Sidonia. Inspector Hawley, he knew, was carrying out investigations in the garden. One of the police cyclists had been dispatched for the wagon to remove the body as soon as remaining witnesses had viewed it.

Kennedy walked briskly along the dim passage and knocked on the door marked "Ladies' Room." Two excited voices ceased instantly, then:

"All right. I am ready," Hilary called.

She opened the door—and stood stock still.

"You weren't expecting me," he said. "But I particularly wanted a few words with you before the interview with Superintendent Croker." He took her arm and drew her quietly out into the corridor. "You see, he will make you sign a statement, and we all have to be careful what we sign."

"I intend to be careful." She spoke in a low, composed voice. "I have no more to be afraid of than—anyone else." She glanced at him swiftly. "Have I?"

"I don't know. What I have in mind is this: Can you explain, to the superintendent's satisfaction, what you were doing in that study, with all lights out? Because, if the explanation is likely to confuse him, say nothing about it."

Hilary was silent for ten seconds, then:

"You mean you thought it was suspicious!" she challenged.

Storm Kennedy sensed the fact that Hilary Bruton, under that forced composure, was overwrought to breaking point, incapable of calm reasoning; that he could hope neither to learn anything from her, nor to guide her in any way.

"I'm sorry you misunderstood me," he said quietly. "I realize we have all got let in for a very nasty business. I only wanted to help, but"—he patted her hand—"think no more about it."

Hilary's lip quivered. She turned aside quickly. But when she spoke, she had her voice well under control.

"Please forgive me. I'm stupidly irritable, at times. One doesn't expect to come to a party and become involved in—a murder." She gave him a fleeting glance. "You are very kind."

The door marked "Private" opened, and a police sergeant beckoned to Hilary.

"Good luck," Kennedy murmured.

At that moment, Peter Faraway came along the corridor.

"I say, Bill—have you seen Sidonia?"

"No. Why?"

"Because she's vanished!"

"Vanished? Since when?"

Peter combed his hair with his fingers. "Let me think. It was before I found the dead chap."

"But, damn it! That's more than an hour ago!"

"I know. Odd thing, isn't it?"

Storm Kennedy hesitated for a moment, and then: "We had better see Inspector Hawley," he muttered. "It's rather more than odd."

MISS ELPHINSTOWE signed her brief statement. Superintendent Croker, who had had the big, untidy desk cleared so that he could sit there interviewing witnesses, was glad to get rid of this one; a very awkward subject, resentful, and difficult to the verge of truculence. Laying her pen down, she asked:

"Do you think, Superintendent, I could hope to go home, now?"

He stood up. He had removed his cap, and with it much of his dignity.

"There is only one more witness to see, Madam. And as none of the guests seems to know anything about the matter, I think I may answer, yes."

"Thank heaven for small mercies! Who's the one exception?"

Miss Elphinstowe was desperately anxious to rejoin Hilary, who had returned from her interview even more pale than before. But her curiosity temporarily conquered her anxiety.

"Someone called Sidonia——"

The superintendent's reply was interrupted. The phone bell rang.

"According to evidence," he muttered, "this line is out of order."

"Service suspended, sir, no doubt," said the sergeant in attendance, respectfully. "Doesn't apply to incoming calls."

Superintendent Croker glared at the man, sat down, and took up the receiver.

"Yes? Superintendent Croker, King's Riding, here."

A moment later, his entire manner changed; his voice became subdued.

"Yes, sir. . . . Superintendent Croker here. . . . I see, sir. . . ." He listened attentively for some time. "I will make all arrangements. . . . Quite clear. . . . You may leave it to me."

He hung up. He glanced at the sergeant and then at Miss Elphinstowe.

"Scotland Yard," he explained. "That was the Assistant Commissioner. I don't know who called the Yard. I didn't. But I'm instructed to hold all material witnesses and keep the body on the premises until the C.I.D. officers arrive——"

"Meaning that I can't go home?" Miss Elphinstowe challenged.

"My regrets, Madam. Yes—meaning that none of you can go home until——"

He stood up again. Miss Elphinstowe turned sharply.

Someone was descending the short stair which led up to an arched opening. Amid a hushed silence, the figure became visible; that of a tall, thin, parchment-faced old man, who peered through pince-nez, who wore an untidy dressing-gown over wrinkled pyjamas. He paused on the last step, looking from one to another.

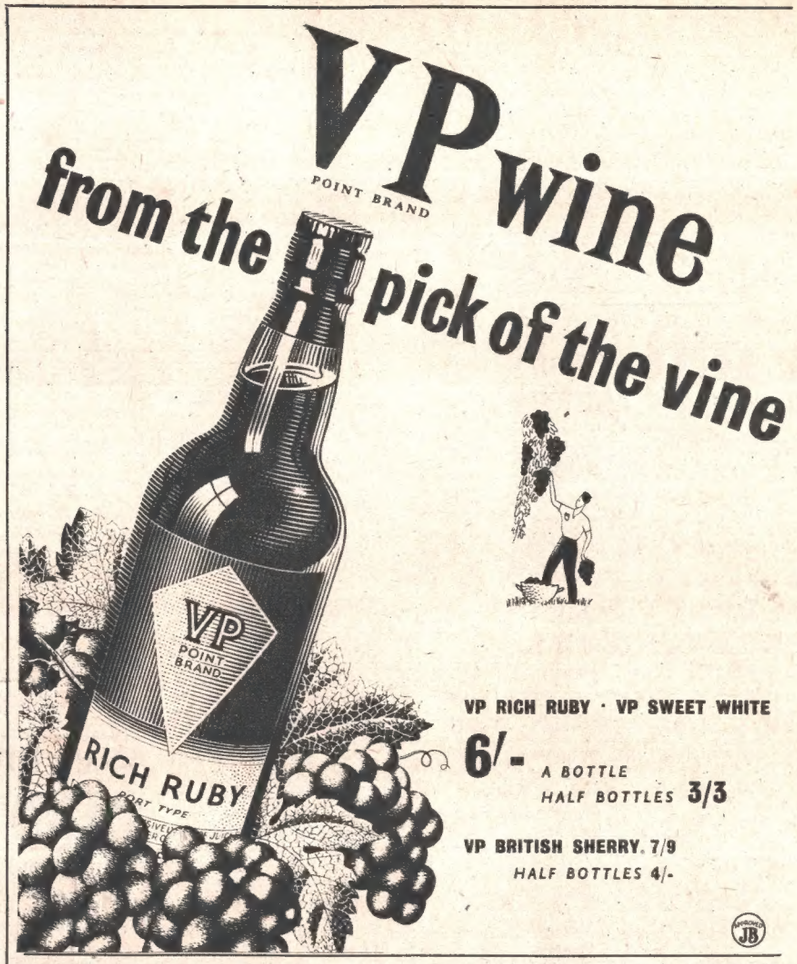
"What the devil is this?" he demanded. He fixed an angry glare on the superintendent. "Who the hell are you? What are you doing at my desk?"

The sergeant whispered: "Larkhall

Continued on page 30

THIS WEEK'S COVER

TIM, the comic artist who does the *Oh, Johnny!* strip, is a serious painter as well. He is also a dog lover and the model for this cover picture was one of his own Boxer puppies. Though he has sketched and painted dogs of various breeds, he says he thinks the Boxer is the most capable of expressing the full range of canine emotions. "This one," he says, "already shows the characteristics of the breed. He is puzzled but shows no sign of running away. Legs firmly planted on the ground, he is ready for anything."



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2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.

3. As entry-fee, enclose P.O. or stamps as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for *Bullets* and Crosswords for entry-fees not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests in *Bulletin* and *Gazette* dated Nov. 26 and in JOHN BULL dated Dec. 3, also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

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The Right Stuff	**Incomplete "Examples" —see instructions**
Flourishing	
Alack And Alas	Takes All Our.....
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Across Clues **XWORD 657**

1. May be found in stable
6. Few battles are won without it
8. Little one probably won't want this for helping mother with housework
9. This of London's river will see important changes
12. It's fairly common for a regiment to take to one
13. The dockers know what it means to do this
14. One can be too small

Down Clues

2. Often breaks out in unexpected places
3. One is sometimes spent with little result
4. Are to be seen occasionally outside a pub
5. Only rarely is one of particular interest to the public
7. Making this of churches could be unintentionally irreverent
8. Player's chances are greatly improved if he has good this
10. It's not so easy to do this as it seems
11. Purchaser of patent medicine hopes that it will be

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12	O	A	T		E			E	M	U				
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Single Square with 6d. P.O. or stamps, covers dispatch to you of *Crossword Gazette* dated November 19.

Winner—sender of most meritorious set of Answers received—decided by Adjudication Committee on basis of aptness and accuracy. Ties divide. Entrants limited to one prize per Contest and to entry requiring not more than 4s. entry-fee. Signature below is agreement to Rules.

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657 Closing Postmark MON., Nov. 7

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HANGOVER HOUSE

Continued from previous page

Pike, sir. He's the owner of the house."

"I am Police Superintendent Croker of King's Riding. If you are the owner of this house I must ask you where you have been all night."

"I have been asleep, sir, a fact it is possible to deduce from my attire. I demand again—what is this?"

Before the superintendent could reply, there came a rap on the door, and Inspector Hawley entered.

"Ambulance from Lychgate is here, sir," he said. "But I have to report the disappearance of a witness wanted for interrogation."

Superintendent Croker swallowed.

"What name?" he snapped.

"The only name I have is Sidonia."

"Who saw her last?"

"Mr. Faraway—just before the crime was discovered."

"Has she been searched for?"

"Men searching now, sir."

"Another question: Am I indebted to you for notifying Scotland Yard of this affair?"

"Yes, sir. The name of the gentleman who called us at Lychgate made me think it was a Yard case. The Honourable Peter Faraway is Lord Deem's son, and those are our instructions where——"

"Quite so!" The superintendent turned to Miss Elphinstowe. "I need not detain you, Madam. But no one must leave the house."

ELFIE went into the little white-panelled room where she had left Hilary. It was empty. The glazed door was half open, and the air of the room damp and misty. Miss Elphinstowe stepped outside.

"Hilary!" she called softly, "Where are you?"

"Ssh! Pull the door to, Elfie! There's — something going on——"

Hilary stood just outside, on the corner of the terrace. And, now, Miss Elphinstowe heard subdued voices, and, somewhere below, saw moving lights.

"What is it, dear?"

"I don't know. I heard Mr. Kennedy's voice. Look! There's a flight of steps here and some sort of a pond at the bottom. The police are down there!"

They stole to the head of the steps, which neither had noted before. The breeze had begun to disperse the fog. It was possible to see a neglected and slimy lily pond below, surrounded by mossy paving. A number of men were moving about, and the scene was lent macabre lighting by flashlamps.

Storm Kennedy was bending over a dim shape which lay beside the pool.

"Oh, my God!" Hilary spoke in a tremulous whisper. "I believe someone else — has been killed!"

Lights were focused on the hitherto shadowy figure — a woman's body lay crumpled on the ground.

It was that of Sidonia.

To be continued next week

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